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ABSTRACT

This guide is aimed at lecturers and tutors providing higher education courses at further education colleges in England. It contains good practice guidelines with examples from more than 50 institutions, information requested by colleges, and suggestions. A companion volume for senior managers addresses policy issues and prospects for higher education in further education colleges. Chapters of this volume are: (1) "The Context for Higher Education in Further Education"; (2) "Developing Higher Level Skills"; (3) "Curriculum Development"; (4) "Assessment"; (5) "Marketing and Recruitment"; (6) "Academic Advice and Support: The Student Life-Cycle"; (7) "Working in Partnership"; (8) "Management and Planning"; (9) "Staffing and Development"; and (10) "Quality Assurance and Enhancement." Four annexes contain lists of institutions contributing to the project, useful Web sites, and additional materials on the Higher Education Funding Council for England Web site and a glossary. (SLD)

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ED 475 556

April 2003/15
Good practice

This report is for information and guidance

This document is aimed at lecturers and tutors providing higher education courses in further education colleges. It contains good practice guidance, with examples from over 50 institutions, information requested by colleges, and suggestions. A companion volume for senior managers (HEFCE 2003/16) addresses policy issues and prospects for HE in FE colleges.

Supporting higher education in further education colleges

A guide for tutors and lecturers

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Introduction: using the materials

This document and additional materials on the web aim to meet the needs of colleges providing higher education, who identified areas in which they would welcome good practice guidance. Further education colleges (FECs) do not always acknowledge what they do as 'good practice', and can be reticent about using the term. The definition of good practice for these materials is examples that have worked well in FECs with higher education provision.

The topics were identified through a questionnaire by the University of Warwick with FECs that receive money from HEFCE's Development Fund for Learning and Teaching, and through feedback from conferences and seminars. Their relevance will depend on the range and size of a college's provision, the nature of its partnerships, and the length of experience that individuals have of HE in FE. This is a very diverse sector in which one size definitely does not fit all.
Not all the materials will be of equal use to all colleges, but we hope some will be. We also believe they will be useful to higher education institutions (HEIs) to inform and develop their partnerships with FECs.

The good practice guidance has been produced at a time of rapid change, but we believe that the principles will still be relevant.

The materials cover:

- guidance (with practical examples from over 40 FECs and 12 HEIs)
- information (requested by some colleges)
- suggestions.

This guide and additional materials – including longer documents, templates and proforma submitted by colleges – are on the HEFCE web-site under 'Publications', HEFCE 2003/15. They can be downloaded and customised to make them most useful for each college's circumstances and provision. These materials are listed in Annex C, and are referred to in the text in **bold**.

Because colleges are likely to use the materials in an order that suits them, they may find some repetition. The materials do not need to be read in sequence. Cross-references to other sections of the guide are also shown in **bold**.

There has been extensive consultation about the draft materials through:

- the original questionnaire
- three conferences for senior managers in the summer of 2002
- regional seminars in all nine English regions, which included delegates from FECs and HEIs – lecturers, student support staff, librarians, careers staff, disability officers – and organisations such as the Learning and Teaching Support Network (LTSN) and the Association of Colleges
- comments from more than 500 people.

1 The context for higher education in further education

1.1	Background to HE in FE
1.2	Distinctiveness of HE in FE
1.3	Some comparisons between FECs and HEIs
1.4	Environment for higher education in a further education college
1.5	Writing strategies for higher education

1.1 Background to HE in FE

Colleges are becoming used to being told that their role is pivotal in:

- widening participation
- offering flexible higher education for students who are employed
- offering delivery modes that suit non-traditional learners
- offering a progression route to FE students who may prefer a familiar college environment
- attracting local students who might not otherwise consider higher education
- developing foundation degrees in partnerships that include employers.

These messages have most recently been reinforced in the Government's White Paper, 'The future of higher education' (January 2003). There is no doubt that colleges carry out these roles effectively and with enormous amounts of enthusiasm and commitment – to their students, their colleagues and their subjects.

However, it is not surprising that some colleges have been disheartened by some of the press coverage about HE provision in FECs. Fortunately, the Quality Assurance Agency (QAA) has reviewed its earlier statements about concerns over quality in FECs. While there have been some examples of poor quality, the majority of QAA subject reviews of HE in FE have identified far more strengths than weaknesses.

Colleges operate in a world of contradictions.

Most HE provision (prescribed HE) is funded by the Higher Education Funding Council for England (HEFCE), which provides funding directly – or indirectly through franchise or consortia arrangements – to some 300 FECs. However, this is not its major area of responsibility.

The Learning and Skills Council (LSC) funds higher level education and training and a raft of professional qualifications and National Vocational Qualifications (NVQs) at levels four and five. This non-prescribed higher education is subject to different requirements from Higher National Diplomas and Certificates (HNDs, HNCs), foundation degrees and other undergraduate and postgraduate programmes, particularly in terms of data collection and quality assurance. So the LSC does not take full responsibility for prescribed HE in FE either.

Colleges are encouraged to develop their HE provision (as long as it is part of a critical mass) and to widen participation by developing new courses for new students. However, policy decisions that allow all HE providers to grow have meant that HEIs have been able to offer more attractive degree course places to many students who had accepted places on HNDs.

The only way colleges can increase their provision is by bidding to HEFCE for additional student numbers. However, this system, designed for institutions with large numbers, may not always appear sympathetic to the needs of institutions with smaller numbers.

So why do colleges offer HE provision?

1.2 Distinctiveness of HE in FE

Colleges believe that they offer something special to students. The student experience in an FEC is different from that in an HEI. FE staff believe that they can offer a student the following.

Personal help and interviews pre-entry
Because there are not as many applicants for each place in an FEC, more individual attention can be offered, including during the Clearing period.

A suitable programme close to home
Local employers know the college and release their staff for part-time study; not having to travel is an advantage for some.

Relevant curricula for new kinds of learners
Most HE courses in FE are vocational, frequently developed to meet local needs jointly with employers, using innovative approaches.

Regular access to friendly, supportive staff
In many cases the HE student has progressed through the FE institution and is well known to the staff, although clear efforts must then be made to offer the step from FE to HE.

Small teaching groups
If students are recruited from under-represented groups, small groups give a more supportive environment to build their confidence.

Plenty of teaching support, especially in the first year
It is common for HND students to have 15-18 contact hours a week, facilitating the gradual transition to more independent learning.

Entitlement to regular personal tutorials
It is common practice for students to have individual tutorials several times a year in addition to group tutorials for careers advice, skills development and portfolio building. Because the group size is manageable, tutors get to know their students very well.

Flexible timetabling
Many FECs timetable to suit part-time or mature students' hours, or to allow students to hold part-time or full-time jobs. The scale of the provision makes this possible.

Staff with industrial experience as well as academic qualifications
The custom of using part-time staff in colleges enables subject teams to recruit practitioners to ensure course content is up-to-date.

Good work experience and industrial contacts

Most colleges offer a range of work placements, work experience and live briefs set by industry. Since a great deal of HE provision in FECs is vocational, industry contact is embedded within the curriculum.

Continuing flexible access to specialist facilities and equipment

Students frequently return to their colleges after they have left to use specialist equipment.

Specialist guidance workers and counsellors

Students have access to specialist support staff on a flexible basis.

Support for learning

Most colleges make it easy for students to get learning support in learning/study skills or specific areas such as dyslexia and using English as a second language (ESOL). There can be some difficulty identifying funding for this work, which is usually supported by the LSC, but most colleges provide accessible learning support.

Good links with HEIs to offer progression routes

Increasingly, progression routes are being agreed to offer 2+1 or 2+2 progression, or joint curriculum development with some tuition in the HEI.

Waltham Forest College (student)

Although I had worked in an office since leaving school I gave up my job to look after my baby son André. In order to ease myself back into the employment market whilst at the same time considering a total career change, I decided to look at what was available for me locally. Initially I came to Waltham Forest College as an evening student at the age of 25. Six years later, having gained a whole range of qualifications including an HND in Fashion, I am now working full-time for David Howard which is a company that supplies menswear to major high street retailers. The college and company have been really great in giving me yet another opportunity to continue studying on a day release basis as a student teacher and gaining experience supporting students in the evening.

Arden School of Theatre, City College Manchester (student)

Having worked since leaving school at 18, the prospect of 'going to college' at the age of 40 was a little daunting. I had been to the Arden School of Theatre for an audition some seven months earlier and was aware that Acting Studies was one of two degree courses on a site shared by numerous further education and specialist HND courses. Although utilitarian and a little shabby, Arden was a fascinating opportunity to rub shoulders with an eclectic mix of musicians (jazz, rock, electronic), fine artists, graphic designers, jewellers, young performers, people with special needs, and many others. It meant that I was not forced to spend every moment with other actors! And the range of courses meant that all age groups were represented. 'Maturity' did not result in my feeling out of place. This was in sharp contrast to my reaction on visiting a local university's Theatre School in a building used exclusively by actors and a few filmmakers. I considered it a retreat by comparison. Give me an Arden anytime!

Stockport College of Further and Higher Education (member of staff)

Nothing can beat the 'buzz' of an FE college, and HE students form an important part of the 'mixed economy' ethos. I would suggest that the 'HE experience' can mean many different things and that, over the next few years, the HEI experience will only be one such example -- and not necessarily the best.

Many of these considerable strengths are connected with the more manageable scale of the provision, and the mix of HE and FE within one institution. However, they must be offset against some of the contradictory policies and issues affecting the student experience. These include:

- financial support for students, especially those on HNCs, who are not eligible for most support systems
- unsuitable accommodation for students because of the lack of capital funding for HE in FE – especially for lecture theatres and dedicated HE social or study areas
- some inadequate learning resources.

There are also issues that largely affect staff but impact on students (see **Section 8**):

- the pressures on staff teaching substantial numbers of hours
- the lack of time for development, scholarly activity and professional updating
- the lack of time to carry out all the administration, monitoring and evaluation that should be taking place as a matter of course
- meeting the requirements of different quality systems
- lack of coherence in data collection for HE and FE.

1.3 Some comparisons between FECs and HEIs

Understanding FECs

There is a wide range of management structures in FECs and a demanding number of validating/awarding bodies to deal with.

HE provision in FE, especially sub-degree work, is often in specific vocational areas where the college has developed 'niche' provision. Vocational programmes of longstanding may have initially been developed and funded quite independently of the HE sector.

Many FECs have built strong links with HEIs, and these need to be pursued with energy and consolidated. They can also be somewhat dependent on their relationship with an HEI if they wish to develop a foundation degree. Colleges with exclusively Edexcel provision might not have an HE partner.

HE teaching groups will probably be smaller in FE, but high teaching loads are standard. In most cases, staff teaching HE will be teaching across a wide range of levels.

Staff deal with a multiplicity of awarding bodies and quality assurance systems and workload is high, so engagement in scholarly activity may be limited by the pressures of time.

Managers at a senior level within the college structure, responsible for the academic and administrative co-ordination, have an important role to play. The scale of the provision usually determines whether there is an HE manager.

Understanding HEIs

HEIs are autonomous organisations, most with their own degree-awarding powers, and distinctive and individual styles of operation. Faculties are frequently autonomous in the partnerships they develop.

Schools, departments or faculties in HE often focus on the development of knowledge and learning within a particular discipline or clusters of disciplines. However, there is a growing emphasis on interdisciplinarity and enterprise, with more flexible choices.

HEIs differ in the extent to which they view FE as a key external partner, and have different levels of understanding of the FE sector

Lecturing staff in HEIs are likely to have lower teaching loads than FE staff, but will frequently have responsibility for the academic achievement of large cohorts of students.

Many HEIs are making efforts to co-ordinate activity with other HEIs and FECs, a move which will be strengthened by the joint HEFCE/LSC initiative, Partnerships for Progression.

1.4 Environment for higher education in a further education college

Some questions identified by colleges include:

- how do you create/cultivate an HE environment?
- how effectively can staff undertake action research and scholarly activity?
- how can FECs best develop students' higher level skills?

Many of the answers depend on the scale of HE provision in the college.

Colleges submitted strategy statements to HEFCE as part of phase two of its Development Fund for Learning and Teaching. An examination of a sample of these statements identified the following

components as important in creating an environment for higher education. This list is an aggregation of features rather than a consensus.

A distinctive experience for students:

- a separate central administrative, admissions and guidance system for HE students
- an HE open day
- an HE graduation/awards ceremony
- clear progression routes.

Curriculum:

- commitment to vocationally focused educational opportunities
- course design in partnership with professional bodies and industrial representatives, with work placement opportunities
- emphasis on transferable skills and employability.

Appropriate staff:

- an HE co-ordinator/manager
- teaching staff with appropriate qualifications
- staff to support learning, for example study and research skills, disabled students, ESOL
- admissions and guidance staff with relevant knowledge
- librarian with relevant experience.

Dedicated activities for staff teaching HE:

- timetabling to allow for preparation and scholarly activity
- specific staff development for staff teaching HE
- staff access to local HEI libraries
- opportunities for research and professional updating
- development of partnerships with HEIs and employers.

Learning resources:

- high quality dedicated learning environment for HE students
- good facilities for study and on-line course support.

Quality systems (some differentiated from FE):

- rigorous assessment of the HE provision
- preparation for QAA reviews
- HE documentation (such as end of module feedback questionnaires, and annual course reviews)
- HE academic/assessment regulations
- HE boards of studies
- HE assessment/examination boards.

Accommodation:

- designated base rooms for HE
- upgraded accommodation
- social and communal areas
- residential accommodation for students
- a lecture room for joint delivery of shared core lectures to HE students on different courses.

Some colleges have chosen to establish an HE Centre or are working towards one.

Norwich City College

With over 1,500 HE enrolments, Norwich City College is the largest regional provider of HE in FE and the largest regional partner of Anglia Polytechnic University. The development of an HE faculty is fundamental to the goals of the college in developing a specific HE ethos and environment. The aim is to enable HE students to relate to the faculty as the focus of their time at the college.

City of Sunderland College

The HE provision at the college was originally fairly evenly split across all of its four sites. This was largely a reflection of where provision was based in the two city colleges prior to merger.

In the last three years, the HE provision has been concentrated in one centre, Shiney Row. This has created a critical mass of HE students, maximising peer identity and peer support, and allowing for the centralisation of HE study materials and support systems. However, Shiney Row Campus is still an active FE centre, so the valuable interaction between HE and FE staff and students, which the college believes to be important in an FE institution, can be maintained.

Some colleges identify a need for a certain amount of separation, frequently because their HE students ask for it. This often reflects the scale of the provision. Other colleges consciously de le to integrate their HE and FE provision.

Cornwall College

In general our philosophy is to provide at least some separation between FE and HE provision. The college has agonised over this for a long time. Many people feel that there is merit in integrating FE and HE, especially as the boundaries between the two become less distinct. Others point to the different expectations in terms of physical resources, staffing workloads and term dates. In the end, our decision to separate has been largely driven by the students themselves. They expect to experience something different. This is especially true for those progressing internally. As they become HE students, they want to make the physical and mental progression that is associated with a change of environment and staff.

Bridgwater College

Our strategy will be to integrate our HE provision within the broader range of college activity. The volume of HE is unlikely to be such that separate HE facilities with separate HE staff would ever be a viable option. We also believe that there are benefits which result from the interaction of HE and FE staff and students.

We do, however, wish to create opportunities for HE students to provide each other with peer support and to meet in both a study and a social context.

Swindon College

We want to develop a distinct brand image for HE within the college. This brand image may in its development be differentiated to meet the different markets for full-time and part-time HE. To this end we want to develop an HE environment for our HE students. However, this has to be tempered by a continual awareness that the HE exists within an FE environment and that, in particular, we must develop an HE culture for these students without discriminating against FE students.

1.5 Writing strategies for higher education

HEFCE introduced the Development Fund for Learning and Teaching (DFLT) in 2000 as a way of supporting further education colleges which were not eligible for the special funding for teaching and learning available to HEIs (see HEFCE 00/09). Colleges with more than 100 full-time equivalent (FTE) higher education students were allocated funding, but all colleges, whatever the size, were required to provide a strategy statement for their higher education provision.

A second phase of the DFLT in April 2002 allocated increased funding (HEFCE 02/02). This time the strategy statements showed a good deal of progress in developing quality systems, to enhance learning and teaching and resources for higher education provision. The strategy statements were more focused, clearer about their sense of purpose and better able to set targets with measurable outcomes.

The best strategy statements are:

- developed and owned by the staff who will implement the objectives
- linked to the college strategic plan
- approved, monitored and supported by senior management
- clear in the purpose and direction for the HE provision
- precisely and concisely expressed
- those with aims underpinned by objectives, expressed as specific actions
- regularly reviewed
- clear about the responsibility for implementation and monitoring.

North Tyneside College (190 FTEs)

The key strategic aims for HE at North Tyneside College include:

- enhance the learning and teaching experience for HE students
- widen participation by developing internal support mechanisms and progression routes to HE programmes
- further develop the skills, scholarship and knowledge of staff and students involved in HE
- improve performance through better retention and achievement on higher education programmes
- expand provision in higher education by increasing the portfolio, either directly funded by HEFCE or through franchise arrangements with local HEIs
- improve the physical and learning resources available to HE students at the college
- encourage a culture of innovation, enquiry and research among staff and students.

These aims are clearly written in order to be understood by the staff who have to carry them out within the context of their higher education provision. They also address key national issues of widening participation, skills development, retention and achievement, and collaboration and partnership.

Translating aims into actions and outcomes is particularly important. Some colleges find this difficult. The SMART acronym helps, that is, actions should be:

S – specific
M – measurable
A– achievable
R – realistic
T – time-based.

Colleges chose a wide variety of activities for their plans. The examples in Table 1 focus on one of the six criteria of the DFLT, developing staff skills, and give some examples of 'smart' targets.

Table 1 Examples of activities and targets

College and number of HE students	Proposed activity for developing staff skills	Target outcomes
Leeds College of Art & Design (512 FTEs)	Allocation of research, curriculum development and professional updating time to all HE course leaders and year tutors.	All relevant staff (total 19 FTEs) to be given entitlement to three weeks per annum (or pro rata).
Leeds College of Music (372 FTEs)	In May 2000 a research committee was established to foster and develop research activity.	Remission from teaching will be provided for up to seven academic HE staff. The appointment of a Teaching Fellow (full-time, fixed term) is required as a consequence.
The Oldham College (421 FTEs)	To increase investment in staff development by enhancing the qualifications' profile, guaranteeing access to relevant courses and conferences, and providing staff training in HE learning and teaching methodology, including the facilitation of independent learning.	15 per cent increase in staff with higher degrees by 2004. All staff to attend a minimum of one external training event annually. Teacher assessment feedback shows 90 per cent grade improvement.* Monitored via staff appraisal, staff records, and the annual review of resources.
Otley College of Agriculture and Horticulture (40 FTEs)	Training at University of East Anglia in the use of WebCT (a commercial package). User workshops to develop staff skills to widen participation through more flexible delivery.	Six staff trained in the use of WebCT by June 2003 to enable it to be applied to three programmes from September 2003.

* As measured by the common inspection framework of grades for teaching observations.

2 Developing higher level skills

2.1	What are higher level skills?
2.2	A college approach to developing higher level skills
2.3	Academic skills
2.4	The independent learner
2.5	Using the library/learning centre
2.6	Supporting higher level skills through ICT

2.1 What are higher level skills?

One of the key differences between the learning of a student at FE level 3 and in higher education is the development of higher level skills. The term 'graduate skills' is used in some parts of the HE sector, while in others graduate skills have been incorporated into the two areas of 'core skills' and 'employability'. For BTEC Higher National programmes, these skills are addressed through Edexcel's common skills.

The QAA's framework for higher education qualifications (FHEQ) may be of help in defining higher level skills. (See the QAA web-site for the full document: www.qaa.ac.uk, under Publications/Qualifications framework.) There are five levels in the framework, moving from level 1, or C, for university certificates to level 5 (D) for doctoral awards, see Table 2.

Table 2 Framework for higher education qualifications

Level	Category	Examples
1 - C	Certificates	Certificates of higher education
2 - I	Intermediate	Foundation degrees, ordinary (bachelors) degrees, diplomas of higher education and other higher diplomas
3 - H	Honours	Bachelor degrees with honours, graduate certificates and graduate diplomas
4 - M	Masters	Masters degrees, postgraduate certificates and postgraduate diplomas
5 - D	Doctoral	Doctorates

Directly funded provision, externally validated by an HEI, will inevitably comply with the HEI's awards framework which will in turn be consistent with the FHEQ.

Although BTEC Higher National awards are not yet included in this framework, it is expected that they will appear at intermediate level, following accreditation by the Qualifications and Curriculum Authority (QCA). Some confusion for staff not familiar with Edexcel programmes is the distinction between H1 and H2 units. These are not equivalent to levels 1 and 2 of the FHEQ, and are not intended to be sequential.

The framework document contains some useful descriptors to help ensure that the qualification is designed and delivered at the appropriate level (see Table 3). When writing programme specifications, words and phrases in the descriptors may be useful, but it must be clear how any wording from the FHEQ applies specifically to the programme.

Table 3 Key words and phrases from the QAA framework for higher education qualifications

Extracts from the descriptor for a qualification at intermediate level	Extracts from the descriptor for a qualification at honours level
Knowledge and critical understanding Apply underlying concepts and principles Apply principles in an employment context Knowledge of main methods of enquiry Evaluate critically different approaches Solve problems Understand limits of knowledge	Systematic understanding of key aspects Coherent and detailed knowledge informed by forefront of discipline Apply established techniques Devise and sustain arguments Conceptual understanding Appreciate uncertainty and limits of knowledge
Use a range of techniques Critical analysis of information Devise arguments Develop existing skills Acquire new competencies Personal responsibility Decision-making	Manage own learning Initiate and carry out projects Critically evaluate arguments, assumptions, concepts and data Identify a range of solutions Use scholarly reviews and primary sources

Note: There is some overlap between levels. If an intermediate programme is particularly challenging it may well draw on a number of phrases from the list for honours level.

Subject benchmark statements

In this context *benchmark* has a different meaning from the way the term is usually used in further education. The QAA's subject benchmarks are 'statements which represent general expectations about standards for the award of qualifications at a given level in a particular subject'. (See the QAA 'Handbook for academic review' page 7.)

The published statements (available on the QAA web-site www.qaa.ac.uk under Publications/Benchmarking) were drawn up by groups of subject specialists and relate to the expected threshold standard for level H (honours degree). There are no specific subject benchmark statements for HND/HNC level work. Although it is not mandatory, it is a good idea for colleges to take the benchmark statements into account when designing and reporting on programmes. If the programme offers progression to a top-up degree course, it is worth showing which of the subject benchmark statements will apply to students at the time they progress.

A draft generic benchmark statement has been produced for foundation degrees, which will be finalised after the QAA reviews of foundation degrees in 2003.

The QAA defines higher level skills in terms of:

- intellectual skills
- practical skills
- transferable/key skills.

Some colleges also offer support in developing learning or study skills.

Intellectual skills

The skills required to understand and engage with the theoretical framework which structures a field of knowledge: research, critical analysis and evaluation. These are the skills most closely identified with academic achievement in higher education.

Practical skills

These are increasingly discussed in terms of employability and problem-solving. They include the ability to apply theory in practice and evaluate theory in the light of practical experience. These skills enable learners to apply theory to action in a critical way and to reflect upon performance. An understanding of these skills also enables students to draw on experiential learning to inform their academic development.

Transferable/key skills

Skills with which the learner can most effectively access, interpret and communicate new and diverse forms of knowledge. They include communication skills, information technology, and numeracy skills; the ability to communicate in written and verbal form; and the ability to work with others. Colleges are likely to have well-developed systems for developing these skills, frequently through students 'claiming' common skills at the end of the BTEC Higher National course.

Learning or study skills

Some colleges find it helpful to offer additional learning and study skills to those students who need them in their first year. This can be done:

- before the course starts
- during induction
- as a drop-in facility in a learning centre
- as taught group tutorials
- in partnership with an HEI.

All types of skills will be identified in the learning outcomes statements, tested through assessment.

Headstart

Headstart, a widening participation study skills project, was developed at City College Manchester in response to the needs of non-traditional students progressing to HE. It then became part of a large HEFCE/LSC funded project, with the college working alongside Manchester Metropolitan University and Manchester College of Arts and Technology.

The project aims to prepare students for higher education. Key features are:

- 30 hour course – delivered as an intensive week or in staged weekly sessions
- accredited by the Greater Manchester Open College Network (GMOCN) – students gain credits and institutions draw down funding
- electronic and paper-based forms, which allows flexibility and independent study
- a facility for customisation, for example for nurses in health trusts
- follow-up support (essential for this target group)
- six modules – the brief, essays, research, tutorials, personal development, plagiarism
- training for tutors to deliver the programme.

For further information, contact Heather Pollitt, the project manager by e-mail: heather@turbotext.co.uk

Hertfordshire Integrated Learning Project

The University of Hertfordshire has developed a useful guide to the development of higher level skills in the context of a number of academic disciplines.

The project uses the term 'graduate skills' and identifies five key areas of skill development:

- self-management
- intellectual skills
- communication
- practical/applied skills
- interpersonal skills.

The project offers some useful materials and tools for development, including:

- skills descriptors
- support materials
- self-assessment materials
- case-studies from different subject areas illustrating the potential of problem-based learning in the development of higher level skills.

There are also useful links to other web-sites dealing with various aspects of skills development in HE: www.herts.ac.uk/envstrat/HILP

2.2 A college approach to developing higher level skills

For FE course teams providing HE, a consensus on the meaning of higher level skills, and approaches to teaching them should be established at the stage of course design. Since not all staff

teaching on the course will have been involved in its design, a written strategy setting out the college's approach to teaching higher level skills will be useful. It is often the higher level skills that will differentiate the progressive and more challenging aspects of learning.

The balance between the QAA's three areas of skills development may vary according to the type of course. Vocational courses, for example, may have a particular emphasis on practical skills. Foundation degrees and top-up degrees accommodate progression to an honours degree for substantial numbers of students. Therefore, it is important that students have a broad understanding of higher level skills as a whole, and the purposes of academic study in its widest sense.

The development of higher level skills in HE has generated considerable debate as to the most appropriate and effective models for delivery. Research into the impact of various models is in its early stages, and no conclusive evidence exists as to which approach works best. However, there is a growing consensus that students respond most effectively when skills development is incorporated within the range of assessed work making up the core part of the course. Separate skills support, possibly provided centrally, can also be helpful. There need to be effective mechanisms for diagnosis and referral and for monitoring progress.

When course teams develop programme specifications (see **Section 10.7**) they will need to consider the skills and their levels. It can be helpful to develop a grid on which all skills are mapped and to see whether they are assessed.

2.3 Academic skills

When course teams are designing teaching and learning activities and assessments, it is worth making sure that a range of academic skills is included, particularly:

- critical analysis
- academic discourse
- research
- referencing
- awareness of plagiarism.

Critical analysis

Students need to be able to evaluate different types of evidence, based on an understanding of how the data have been collected, interpreted and presented. Critical analysis is one of the skills for which students need to provide evidence progressively through their learning.

Academic discourse

In FECs where recruitment is largely from under-represented groups, students may well need focused support in this area and other study skills. Students need to understand how to use key terms and concepts connected with their subject, along with related vocabulary.

Research

Higher level skills for both academic achievement and employability require students to engage directly in the generation of knowledge in their chosen subject area. Terms such as 'investigation' and 'enquiry' raise learners' awareness of the many ways in which they are already engaged in collecting and collating information. The status and use of that knowledge is a foundation for the development of a more systematic set of practical research skills.

For FE staff who are not exposed on a daily basis to institutional debates on research, many HEIs offer free-standing modules or workshops on research methods, or could be invited to present a workshop to introduce staff to current discourse on research approaches and methodology.

Some leaders of Higher National programmes import one of the Edexcel units on research methodology into their programmes (for example, the unit in travel and tourism).

Useful texts include:

- Bell, J (1999) Doing your research project. 3rd edition. Open University Press
- Blaxter, L, Hughes, C & Tight, M (1996) How to research. Open University Press
- Cryer, P (2000) The research student's guide to success. 2nd edition. Open University Press.

Referencing

The purpose of referencing is to assist others (including examiners) to map the development of knowledge and follow up themes of particular interest. It is a professional expectation that academic arguments are attributed appropriately, and failure to do so, whether out of ignorance or a deliberate intention to conceal sources, is treated very seriously. Students need to be introduced to correct referencing from an early stage. Various protocols have been developed, of which the Harvard method of referencing is probably the most widely used.

Clear understanding of the process of referencing and why it matters should reduce the amount of unwitting plagiarism.

Awareness of plagiarism

A clear understanding of the processes and protocols described above is particularly important in helping students to understand definitions of plagiarism. Misuse of the internet and copying and pasting extracts from others' work is a growing problem. Indeed, cultural differences may make this apparently acceptable for some international students. HEIs and FECs are increasingly developing their own guidelines about academic honesty. It may be useful for FECs to work with local HEIs in developing their approaches to the issue. New software packages are now available for detecting plagiarism, a development of which all students should be made aware.

Evidence suggests that weaker students are most vulnerable to charges of plagiarism; they are less certain about how to handle new subject matter and less confident about expressing their views. These students may also have limited command of essay-writing skills and the conventions attached to quotation. International students are also at risk: academic conventions are to a certain extent culture-bound, and expectations of how sources should be used and referenced should be clearly explained.

The funding bodies' Joint Information Systems Committee (JISC) – www.jisc.ac.uk – has funded projects on plagiarism and offers an advisory service, www.jiscpas.ac.uk.

2.4 The independent learner

Developing in students the confidence to operate as independent learners is core to the development of higher level skills and a positive approach to lifelong learning in the workplace.

The ability to operate as an independent learner is particularly important for those who are:

- intending to move on to study in an HEI
- moving on to top-up degrees from Higher National awards. This is critical for students moving into the second or final year of a degree course, as by then students are expected to operate with a high degree of autonomy and self-reliance
- progressing from foundation degrees.

Diplomates or graduates entering employment will equally need these skills for long-term effectiveness in updating their skills and facing the challenges of new learning in the years ahead.

Students who move from FE into HE are generally positive about the experience of studying HE in FE. However, some students do not feel they have been well prepared for the experience and struggle with new and unanticipated expectations. HND students, for example, frequently report difficulties with the volume of reading required, and the expectation that all students will have well-developed essay-writing skills or be able to cope with a dissertation. Some HEIs run special workshops for students making the transition at this stage, to prepare them for the experience. However, these cannot cover the long-term development of independent learning skills. Students in FECs need to develop the skills that will make them feel comfortable if they transfer to an HEI very different from their current experience. Table 4 sets out some of the skills of independent learning.

Table 4 Skills of independent learning

Time management	• balancing the demands of study with work and/or domestic commitments • understanding and planning for a set amount of study time per week, over and above contact time • organising time across different study activities • prioritising efficiently • meeting deadlines • planning for contingencies
Reading	• planning and organising a reading schedule • reading to deadlines, using skimming and scanning techniques • using various forms of note-taking, and spidergrams and mind mapping to assist learning from reading • recording sources for referencing
Self-motivation	• working independently without regular reassurance • taking active responsibility for seeking feedback • seeking out and using formal structures of support • building peer group support
Information technology	• locating resources through on-line catalogues • seeking information independently via the web • using discussion groups and virtual learning environments.

Student self-assessment questionnaires

Many colleges in the US have developed independent learner profiles, short on-line questionnaires designed as recruiting and self-assessment tools for virtual programmes of learning. These could usefully be adapted for FE use.

Additional material on the web: Self-assessment questions for independent learners, Lansing College, adapted with permission from Waukesha County Technical College, Wisconsin.

2.5 Using the library/learning centre

Some colleges struggle to sustain the level of funding enjoyed by HEIs for developing learning resources. The comparatively limited resources available for library materials has sometimes disadvantaged colleges in terms of quality assurance. For example, it can be difficult to provide a wide selection of journals with the most current articles, abstracts and reviews.

Staff teaching on HE courses and learning centre/library staff need to work together in making available a broad and rich range of texts and resources, both traditional and electronic. Library staff from local HEIs will often help. This may take the form of negotiating access to the university's learning resource centre, or through professional support in developing electronic access. Imaginative and creative use of new technology can give most colleges access to a wide range of resources. Practical and comprehensive induction of students and on-going support from learning centre staff should back this up.

It makes a real diffe ence if these members of staff are proactive in bringing students into the learning centre and teaching them to help themselves.

Teaching staff in some FECs support students extremely well for substantial amounts of contact time. This approach occasionally means that students become dependent on their teachers and do not develop the skills of independent learning. They need to spend time accessing external sources too.

Colleges occasionally underplay the value of journals or periodicals, which can offer important updating of the subject. A number of colleges have purchased Infotrac (an on-line collection of 3,000 journals in a range of subjects). However, some students need to be encouraged to read paper-based journals. Setting a task whereby a small group of students read different articles on the same subject from a range of journals, and then present their findings to the rest of the group, has been a useful way of getting them to appreciate the currency of journals.

South Cheshire College

South Cheshire College has drawn together a wide range of academic electronic resources under one roof to create a virtual learning resource centre (LRC) within its Learnwise managed learning environment (a commercial package).

The virtual LRC includes

- a home reference library (dictionaries, encyclopaedias, directories and timetables)
- subject gateways under the auspices of JISC, including a direct link into the Pinakes homepage hosted by Heriot Watt University, giving entry to major subject gateways for UK higher education
- subscription e-resources such as Know UK and Newsbank (obtained at special rates through JISC)
- inter-library loans catalogues, such as OPAC and the British Library.

In addition to including the LRC area within Learnwise, the college has established a separate icon on the interactive desktop to further encourage students and staff to use the virtual LRC. It is particularly useful for the HE students, as most of the JISC gateways and portals were initially established for HE.

Colleges usually provide library induction for all their students. Some differentiate activities for HE students by adding to their basic induction:

- information on copyright, plagiarism and collecting references
- presentation of appropriate reference materials, specialised collections and journals
- advice on planning research
- help with literature searching and information resources.

Gloucestershire College of Arts and Technology

Two important new staff roles were created in the learning centres: gateway adviser and gateway tutor. These roles have been essential to achieving more effective integration of information and communication technology (ICT) by:

- proactively providing direct support, and guidance to learners in using the ICT resources, and in engaging in open learning
- producing open learning resources for a given curriculum area
- identifying and evaluating ICT resources and cataloguing all resources for a curriculum area.

Advisers were selected for a good subject expertise and to be a cross-college resource. Their attitude to change and new ideas and their ability to work effectively with lecturers are also important. Gateway tutors also provide direct delivery to students.

The introduction of gateway advisers and tutors has made a significant impact in the effective delivery of ICT through projects, some of which are listed below:

- research into suitable web-sites
- developing a virtual reality leisure centre
- creating spreadsheets to understand social trend information
- producing on-line worksheets for social care
- developing interactive web-sites for skills for work.

2.6 Supporting higher level skills through ICT

Learning through information technology takes place within a rapidly changing world. JISC has connected all FE colleges to the Joint Academic Network (JANET), and has established regional centres to provide local support for colleges in using the network and other JISC services. The government's web-site on ICT in education, the British Educational Communications and Technology Agency (BECTA), offers a wide range of supporting materials: www.becta.org.uk.

On-line learning and virtual learning environments

Educational institutions at all levels are currently considering the most effective way to deliver learning opportunities to their students over the Internet. It is now widely recognised that teachers should be empowered to produce and manage on-line learning opportunities without having to undertake a course in web design. Virtual learning environments (VLEs) address this and other pedagogical issues.

A VLE incorporates software that enables teachers to generate on-line content by means of simple keyboard procedures. No web design skills are required. The essential characteristic of a VLE is that it should be easy to use. Additional features may:

- enable teachers to produce tests that are automatically marked on-line
- allow teachers to track the progress of students on-line
- allow communication with groups of students on-line
- allow assignments to be circulated on-line.

A VLE should do what it says: produce a virtual environment in which students and teachers interact to help students learn.

There are many commercial companies producing VLEs but a handful currently dominate the UK market. These include Blackboard, WebCT, Granada Learnwise, TekniCAL, PLATO and Fretwell Downing LE. Two questions face educational institutions in relation to commercial VLEs: do we need it and if so which one?

Additional material on the web: Choosing a virtual learning environment, City College Manchester.

Reading College

A web-based resource, www.design-stuff.co.uk, allows graphic design students to keep up to date with information and initiatives the staff are putting into the course as the year progresses. For example, they can download teaching notes for the modules on the course.

The resource is a supplement to the normal contact teaching time not a distance learning initiative. The use by and response from students has been very encouraging.

QAA reports

The College of North West London, Engineering, May 2002

'Computing facilities are generally good, especially the Digital Village project which has used partnerships with industry to fund an open-plan centre with PCs and digital simulators.'

Oaklands College, Engineering, March 2001

'A praiseworthy practice is that students use the software to design complete products that are then manufactured and tested to complete their learning cycle.'

3 Curriculum development

3.1	Developing the curriculum within a national policy context
3.2	Developing higher education programmes
3.3	Models for developing a new programme in an FEC
3.4	Stages in developing a new programme
3.5	Development of foundation degrees
3.6	Role of Sector Skills Councils in foundation degree development
3.7	A regional approach to developing foundation degrees
3.8	HEIs and FECs working effectively together

3.1 Developing the curriculum within a national policy context

FECs and HEIs will both be aware of their role in meeting the government target of 50 per cent of those aged 18-30 having experience of higher education by 2010. There is a general agreement that FECs are key to this growth, but this potential is not borne out by the numbers of students on higher education programmes recruited to FECs over the last few years. The figures show little growth, even a decline in directly funded provision.

The White Paper on the future of higher education highlights the role FECs are expected to play in expanding provision, mainly through foundation degrees but also by offering new courses to new learners using new methods of delivery.

All providers of higher education may need to re-examine what they offer the prospective students who do not currently enter higher education. This group may:

- have had an unrewarding experience at school
- have little confidence in their own ability
- see being employed as more important than studying
- have few role models in their immediate family or among their friends
- not see themselves as traditional undergraduates.

FECs have experience they can draw on to support students from under-represented groups by:

- raising awareness and aspirations, perhaps through projects funded under the Excellence Challenge initiative and other outreach work
- offering information, advice and guidance close to home
- offering tuition in a flexible way in small groups
- offering enough individual contact for the student to feel well-supported
- accommodating students' need to work part-time by careful timetabling
- offering a welcoming environment in which students from a diversity of backgrounds feel comfortable.

Northbrook College

Part-time students studying for a degree in computing at Northbrook College may be very different from undergraduate counterparts in a university. For example, they may:

- take longer to get the qualification
- attend on day release from work
- work online with e-mail contact with tutors
- have the support of the employer
- be able to apply their studies directly to their workplace
- not be interested in what is commonly understood to represent student life.

FECs have the community links and the potential to act quickly in response to demand. It is therefore vital that HEIs working with FE partners have structures which can support flexible and fast responses to local markets.

Buckinghamshire Chilterns University College

We validate and quality assure a combined studies programme which is offered by four neighbouring FE colleges. The programme is designed for adult part-time students who wish to sample HE study at level 1. The programme is flexible: we offer modules ranging from metalcraft to abnormal psychology and Islamic studies. The colleges react to local demand, and the process for validating new modules can be completed quite quickly. The programme is now four years old and over 500 students have achieved at HE level 1.

New students will probably need a new curriculum. FECs and HEIs are using the intelligence from Regional Development Agencies to identify skills shortages and are also assessing student interest in new areas. Table 5 gives examples of recently developed courses.

Table 5 Examples of courses developed to meet demand

Course	Level	Institution
Adventurous activity management	HND	Cornwall College
Brewing and distilling	BSC	Heriot-Watt University
Calligraphy and heraldry	HND	East Surrey College
Cleaning science	Foundation degree	Matthew Boulton College with Coventry University
Culinary arts management	BA	Birmingham College of Food, Technology and Creative Studies
Decorative artefacts	BA	De Montfort University
European film and world cinema	BA	University of Exeter
Football technology	BSc	Staffordshire University
Gamekeeping	HNC	University of the Highlands and Islands (UHI)
Interactive entertainment systems	BSc	University of Sunderland
Live television production	HND	Buckingham Chilterns University College
Logistics and transport	Foundation	Anglia Polytechnic University

	degree	
Professional cookery	HNC	UHI Millennium Institute
Professional gardening and plant knowledge	HND/BSc	University of Central Lancashire
Sail and powerboat studies	BSc	Pembrokeshire College
Turf science and golf course management	HND	University of Central Lancashire
Viking studies	BA	University of Nottingham
Virtual reality design	BA	University of Huddersfield
Visitor attraction management	HND	University of Central Lancashire
Wildlife identification	HND	University of Central Lancashire

Many FECs offer additional short courses which enhance their HND provision. For example, a student taking an HND in travel and tourism might also have the opportunity in many colleges to take such additional FE qualifications as:

- ticketing
- the ABTA travel agents certificate, ABTAC
- the Galileo booking system
- foreign languages.

3.2 Developing higher education programmes

Colleges develop new programmes for a variety of reasons, but there should be a clear strategy for these developments. Having an enthusiastic member of staff who would like to develop the next stage in a subject area is not sufficient reason, unless there are palpable indications that students on FE programmes would progress within the institution and there is a wider demand. Nor are general wishes to increase the HE provision or widen participation good enough by themselves. A key plank of planning in the LSC is the notion of 'adequacy and sufficiency'. However, the strategy for FECs wishing to develop HE programmes need not be constrained by this. (For further discussion of strategy, see **Section 1.4** above, and the companion document, 'Supporting higher education in further education colleges: policy, practice and prospects', HEFCE 2003/16.)

Any strategy to develop new programmes should derive from local initiatives (for example to address skills shortages), national initiatives (such as foundation degrees), or partnerships with employers or HEIs or other FECs. In particular, colleges need to pay even more attention to providing different sorts of programmes which are delivered flexibly to attract groups of students who may not normally have considered higher education. The flexibility may include catering specifically for part-time students, timetabling to accommodate part-time work, and offering opportunities to work on-line from home or work.

Local circumstances usually determine the best way forward. However, when thinking about the development of a new HE programme, do not underestimate the amount of planning time that will be needed, especially where other partners are involved. FECs are used to being responsive to rapid change. The rather more complex procedures of an HEI will almost always slow down the process. Time is needed to understand partners' culture, structure and priorities, which will strengthen the basis for the development.

Key elements

It may help to reflect on the following key questions:

- why does the college want to offer the programme?

- does it have any feeder or pre-entry programmes?
- will there be articulated progression routes?
- is there local or regional demand from employers?
- is there student demand from within the college and outside?
- are staff willing and able to spearhead the development and design of the programme at the appropriate level?
- does the college have or will it be able to get the resources, including:
  - well-qualified and committed staff
  - accommodation
  - specialist resources
  - library stock?
- does the college have available student numbers or will it need to bid to HEFCE for additional numbers?
- are there suitable partners to work with?
- is there a sufficiently long lead-in time?

3.3 Models for developing a new HE programme in an FEC

Some of the current models for developing a new HE programme in an FEC are set out below, analysed under the following headings: context, process, support, quality assurance, cost and key features. The five models are:

- validation by an HEI of directly funded provision
- the Open University Validation Service
- Edexcel (formerly BTEC programmes)
- indirectly funded partnership or franchise
- accreditation.

Model one: Validation by an HEI of directly funded provision

Context

The college designs and writes the programme, often with the advice and help of subject specialists in the HEI. The HEI approves the programme. This model usually applies to foundation degrees, honours degrees, postgraduate diplomas and masters degrees, and can include Higher National awards under licence.

The process

First step is to approach the HEI in principle and get the support of the relevant department. (Some HEIs will not validate programmes if they do not offer the same subject themselves.) Complete the HEI's new programme proposal about the demand for such a programme, the labour market information, course design, teaching and learning, assessment and resources – human and physical – including staff CVs. Ensure that senior management in the college supports the proposal. Also obtain as much information as possible from the HEI about the validation process, so everyone is clear exactly what is involved.

The programme is validated to assure the HEI that this is a valid HE programme, with HE aims and outcomes, offering an HE experience to students. The 'validation event' normally involves a visit to the college to view the library, accommodation and other resources; and a meeting (frequently half a

day) with a panel from the HEI and an external adviser. Establish good communications with the HEI and ensure that the college is kept updated about progress.

It will be important to designate link roles in the FEC as part of the approval process to support ongoing quality assurance processes. (For further information about roles, see **Section 8.2**.)

Support
Staff in the colleges involved in the programme will need a support structure for staff development, research and scholarly activity. Some of this could usefully be provided by the HEI.

Quality assurance
The college will be required to follow the quality assurance system of the HEI. For example the HEI will appoint the external examiner. Identify staff and schedules for quality assurance processes and administration. The programme will be subject to QAA academic review even if those of the HEI are not. There is likely to be a periodic review, probably every five years.

Cost
Usually the FEC is charged fees by the HEI on a per capita basis, depending on student access to HEI resources. Some examples give £100-150 per head. Ensure that the college negotiates a reasonable fee, and that there is a binding written agreement.

Key features:
- students obtain an award of the HEI, which can bring added status
- if local, students may have access to HEI facilities such as the library, but this must be negotiated
- there may be enhanced progression opportunities for students
- the college designs the programme and has ownership of it
- the FEC develops a productive working relationship with the HEI department, providing good staff development opportunities for FE staff.

<u>Model two: Open University Validation Service (OUVS)</u>
Context
The OUVS developed from the former Council for National Academic Awards (CNAA). When CNAA was dissolved, the (then) DfEE asked the Open University to take over validating responsibilities for those institutions that did not become universities. Like CNAA, the OUVS operates through processes that rely on peer networks and judgements. The emphasis is on the development of ownership for quality assurance by the providing institution. So an organisation must first achieve **accreditation** by demonstrating that the organisation can provide an appropriate and supportive infrastructure for the delivery of HE programmes.

The process
Validation of programmes is a similar process to that of other validating HEIs, although OUVS draws on a national network of peers. In preparing for accreditation of institutions and validation of HE programmes, OUVS takes a developmental approach and will work with institutions and course teams. Programmes need to be clearly comparable with other HE programmes, and staff CVs will be vetted.

The institution completes a preliminary questionnaire to assess whether it is eligible for accreditation. An advisory visit follows a decision to progress. A validation event (see model one above) then

assures the programme as a valid HE programme, with HE aims and outcomes, offering an HE experience to students.

Support
The OUVS works closely with the course team developing the curriculum for validation, but staff will need time for professional and curriculum development and scholarly activity.

Quality assurance
The college will need to follow the stringent quality assurance systems of the OUVS. Programmes will be subject to QAA academic review.

Cost
A one-off charge is made of £3,000-£4,000, with ongoing charges per capita for registered students.

Key features:
- a national validating body close to the Open University
- can lead to institutional accreditation
- a very good support service if it has the capacity
- may be an answer to problems affecting foundation degree development.

Model three: Edexcel (formerly BTEC programmes)
Context
This covers BTEC HND and HNC programmes, following standard specifications. In specialist areas not covered by standard specifications, colleges can devise their own specifications. (HND/HNC programmes can still be delivered in HEIs under licence, which means the HEI can design its own programme. This does not apply to FECs although FECs can deliver a Higher National programme developed by an HEI under licence. Discussions continue with the QCA about accreditation of Higher National programmes.)

The process
First seek approval from Edexcel, giving details of the staff who will deliver and assess the programme (usually by including CVs), and the specialist physical resources necessary for the qualification. For centre-devised qualifications, the full units also need to be submitted: 16 units for an HND, 10 units for an HNC. A certain number of units can be imported from other specifications.

When Edexcel publishes new specifications that replace an existing qualification, approval is usually transferred to the new qualifications using a streamlined approval process.

Send the proposal/submission to Edexcel. It is scrutinised by a reader or panel and may then be approved after any necessary revisions. Currently, programmes are being approved for some years without a formal periodic review system. FECs need to ensure that their own internal systems review this provision.

Support
Edexcel offers a number of staff development opportunities. Staff designing new programmes will need time for scholarly activity and curriculum development.

Quality assurance
The college will follow Edexcel's quality assurance system, which involves a combination of visits by an external verifier, national standards sampling, and self reporting, all underpinned by the FEC's own robust internal verification policy. Programmes will be subject to QAA academic review.

Ensure that the college systems are robust and rigorous and that course teams have ownership of them and their implementation.

Cost
The annual registration fee is around £100 per student for the qualification.

Key features:
- offering a nationally validated qualification
- support of a specification designed by the awarding body so it can be operated off the shelf
- the opportunity for the college to design some of its own units
- the college implements Edexcel's systems without reference to an HEI.

Model four: Indirectly funded partnership or franchise
Context
The initiative may be taken by either partner. The course can be developed by the HEI or through collaborative arrangements. The FEC may be approached by the HEI to offer part of a degree, a whole degree, or a diploma. This may be because it does not have the accommodation or staff to offer so many places. Or, commonly with foundation years, it is because the HEI believes the FEC has something distinctive to offer in terms of location, widening participation or links with employers and the community.

The process
The model of development and the nature of the partnership will determine the college's involvement. HEIs can develop HNDs under licence from Edexcel, a process which is becoming more flexible and may be worth considering. Some programmes, especially foundation degrees, are developed collaboratively. HNC/HND programmes have been designed to link up effectively with foundation degrees, in some cases by mapping them against the course design.

There will probably be some process of validation where the HEI visits the college to assess the quality of the staff, resources and other facilities.

Support
Staff in the FEC need close links with subject staff in the HEI and the opportunity to join staff development activities. It will be important to designate link roles in the FEC as part of the approval process to support ongoing quality assurance processes. (For further information about roles, see **Section 8.2**.)

Quality assurance
The college follows the quality assurance systems of the HEI. The programme may not be subject to QAA academic review but will be subject to the HEI's periodic review and included in part of the HEI's provision during QAA institutional audit.

Cost

This varies a great deal. HEIs top-slice a proportion of the HEFCE funding per student, on the basis of what they offer the FEC in return. This can range from 10-40 per cent. The partnership agreement should demonstrate the arrangements clearly (see HEFCE 00/54, the code of practice for franchise and consortia arrangements).

Key features:

- usually a close working relationship with the HEI
- support for staff development
- good progression opportunities for students
- student access to HEI facilities.

Model five: Accreditation

Accreditation is a further arrangement, still relatively unusual, which combines some of the features described above. For an FE college this means that the FEC develops, validates and teaches undergraduate programmes which are awards of the accrediting university. To achieve accreditation, the FEC will normally have substantial HE provision. (See the case study of Suffolk College and the University of East Anglia in HEFCE 2003/16.)

3.4 Stages in developing a new programme

Any college thinking about introducing or developing a new programme needs to be clear how this fits with its HE strategy. Adopting a forward-looking approach about what to offer in terms of the subject and how to deliver the curriculum to accommodate the target group will be most effective.

New provision can be developed in two stages, taking account of the guidance in the QAA code of practice, section 7, on programme approval, monitoring and review (see www.qaa.ac.uk under Publications/Codes of practice). The advantage of this is that the decision about whether a course will be relevant, in demand and viable comes before the intensive course design is undertaken.

The method proposed will differ according to whether the new programme will be directly or indirectly funded. Courses are subject to the programme approval process of the validating body. The awarding/validating body may require completion of a standard template, supported by guidance notes. For further advice, clarification or support, contact the appropriate validating body/institution.

Additional material on the web: Programme approval template, developed by a member of the Open University staff.

Whatever the format, the proposal will usually cover the main areas listed below.

Stage one

The initial proposal could contain the following:

- a rationale for the programme – why it should be introduced and the evidence base
- how it fits in with the college's strategy
- labour market information that suggests that this is a course that is needed locally, regionally and perhaps nationally (see below for further detail)

- a competitor analysis that shows whether this subject area is already available in the locality. It can be helpful to look on the web for similar programmes further away to determine a benchmark. Edexcel will also give information about colleges offering an award
- evidence of student demand. This needs careful planning, and should not only be from students progressing internally
- recognition of the wider range of abilities students might demonstrate
- information about partners involved in the development
- evidence of employer support and support from National Training Organisations/Sector Skills Councils or other relevant bodies
- an indication that the awarding body will validate it at the planned level
- resource implications – that is, staff including staff qualifications, accommodation and equipment
- a simple business plan showing how the HEFCE grant allocation and tuition fees would meet the resources necessary for the programme with the appropriate contribution to the college.

Additional material on the web: Model business plan for proposed HE course, City College Manchester.

Market research and labour market intelligence
The following web-sites give useful information:
- labour market information, www.statistics.gov.uk, then select Themes, Labour market
- National Training Organisations, www.nto-nc.org
- Regional Development Agencies, www.dti.gov.uk then select Regional and Regional Development Agencies
- Sector Skills Development Agency, www.ssda.org.uk.

It will save time and effort to get approval for stage one before moving on.

Stage two
Alongside the course development, the college may need to prepare or contribute to a bid to HEFCE for additional student numbers (ASNs). The timing of this is critical since bids go to HEFCE in October/November of the year preceding the start of the course. This means the development work needs to be done well in advance to be ready for the bidding process. HEFCE will usually allow two years to recruit to a new programme.

The development will then address:
- overall educational aims of the programme and the intended outcomes of learning
- curriculum design – units/modules and the level of the programme, making sure it matches the level descriptors in the QAA framework for higher education qualifications where appropriate (see **Section 2.1**)
- reference to QAA subject benchmark statements, where appropriate
- teaching and learning strategy
- assessment strategy
- student support
- the development of learning materials (which can be shared in a collaborative development, thus ensuring that students on the same programme use the same materials)
- resources:
  - staff (availability, experience, specialisms, qualifications, with a CV or teaching profile)

  - accommodation
  - equipment (including IT)
  - other learning resources, especially library book stock and periodicals
- the programme specification
- progression arrangements
- the timescale for receiving accreditation or validation
- contribution to the ASN bid
- the marketing strategy (marketing can start before validation or ASN bids are approved as long as the publicity materials say 'subject to validation').

3.5 Development of foundation degrees

The response to the Government's invitation to bid for prototype foundation degrees in 2000 led to some rapid and innovative curriculum development. Because the bidding process was underpinned by the need to have partnerships between HEIs, FECs and employers, and because groups or new consortia proposing foundation degrees had to work much more quickly than usual, there is some interesting practice. (For a full review and some case studies, see the report by the PricewaterhouseCoopers support team, 'Types of foundation degrees' on the HEFCE web-site, www.hefce.ac.uk under Publications/R&D reports.)

The emphasis on the expansion of foundation degrees in the White Paper on the future of higher education confirms the position of this qualification as one of the key planks of policy. The Government intends to provide development funding to support the design of new foundation degrees. It also proposes a package of incentives for students, and actively encourages further links between FECs, HEIs and the RDAs and Sector Skills Councils. The Government envisages that much of the planned expansion of foundation degrees will take place in FECs, through structured partnerships between colleges and universities.

From 2004, the Government will provide additional funded places for foundation degrees, in preference to traditional honours degree courses, so that growth will come predominantly through foundation degrees.

Lessons from foundation degrees

In addition to the support team, the Department for Education and Skills (DfES) funded a foundation degree officer, managed by the Association of Colleges. The case studies, advice and sharing of good practice that have emerged as a result have been extremely useful. The lessons learned are summarised below, with thanks to Margaret Lawson, Foundation Degree Officer.

HEFCE-recognised funding consortia can be led by further education colleges. If some form of collaborative agreement already exists, for whatever purpose, it may well facilitate the process of designing and developing foundation degrees but it is not essential for partners to already be part of an agreement. A new group can be formed involving a variety of institutions and employers to design and develop a foundation degree to meet local needs.

For foundation degree consortia that were not funded as one of the prototypes, FECs can be funded by HEFCE in any one of three ways:

- as part of a HEFCE-recognised funding consortium
- indirectly funded via the HEI partner

- directly funded (so long as they have HEI partners that validate the degrees and offer progression routes).

The development of foundation degrees is an excellent incentive for HEIs and FECs to work together.

Consortia have found it useful to follow the guidelines set out in HEFCE 00/54. In particular it is important to draw up and agree a proper partnership agreement (memorandum of co-operation) as early as possible. This should clarify procedures for funding, allocation of student numbers, staffing, resources, and quality issues. It should be discussed and agreed by all staff involved in the development process, not just senior management.

A foundation degree must be validated by an HEI, but can be offered and funded through HEFCE by an FEC. If a local HEI is not keen to become involved or does not offer the best progression routes for the proposed foundation degree, then look further afield. However, as a foundation degree should meet local needs, this would clearly favour working with a local HEI wherever possible.

Involve employers and employer organisations as well as the new Sector Skills Councils at an early stage as they are crucial to the success of foundation degrees. There may be issues over confidentiality with work-based assessment. Ensure agreement is reached with the employer before the course starts, perhaps through a 'learning contract'.

Entry requirements must be designed to encourage application by non-standard students, and should recognise the work experience of potential students. Develop and use the excellent accreditation of prior (experiential) learning (APL/APEL) systems for foundation degree students.

There are many variations of programme design and delivery in foundation degrees, but the majority are designed around a range of modules or units – both core and optional – which attract a total of at least 240 credits (120 at level 1 and 120 at level 2). Key skills are integrated into the course modules in most foundation degree designs and assessed in a variety of ways.

Work-based learning is an essential feature of the foundation degree; the degree must reinforce, as well as enhance, work-based skills. Assessment of work-based learning must be fully integrated into the course, not 'bolted on'. This assessment should be valuable educationally to the student but also considered productive by the employer.

Progression routes must have been previously negotiated and agreed with HEIs as part of the design process. Some HEIs are starting to develop new honours degrees more appropriate to the needs of foundation degree graduates.

Quality assurance arrangements, an important part of the foundation degree, are laid down by the HEI validating the degree.

Looking back on their developments of prototype foundation degrees, a number of colleges are concerned that the design had been over-influenced by consideration of the content and approach of existing progression routes. These colleges warn that it is inappropriate to design a foundation degree to fit in with the third year of an honours degree. HEIs might need to reconsider what they offer in year three for those students who progress.

3.6 Role of Sector Skills Councils in foundation degree development

Sector Skills Councils (SSCs) are independent, UK-wide organisations developed by influential employers in industry or business sectors of economic or strategic significance. SSCs are employer led, and actively involve trade unions, professional bodies and other stakeholders in the sector. The establishment of the SSC network began in April 2002, and there are now seven in operation, see Table 6.

Table 6 Sector Skills Councils

Name of SSC	Key sectors represented
Cogent	Oil, gas, chemical manufacturing and petroleum
TES (EMTA)	Technology, engineering and science
Skillsmart - UK	Retail
Skill fast	Clothing, footwear and textiles
c-Skills UK	IT and telecommunications
Lantra	Environment and land-based industries
Skillset	Audio visual industries

The Sector Skills Development Agency was established to underpin the SSC network and promote effective working between sectors. Details, and links to the SSCs, are available on the web at www.ssda.org.uk. If no SSC exists as yet in a particular sector, then contact the SSDA for further help.

Educational institutions should contact their appropriate SSC for help in the design, delivery and promotion of foundation degrees. They can provide information on skills required in any particular geographical or sector area, and can advise on the integration of national occupational standards into the design of foundation degrees.

Each SSC will agree sector priorities and targets with its employers to address four key goals, one of which is improving the supply of learning, including apprenticeships, higher education and national occupational standards.

A number of SSCs are beginning to articulate the needs of employers.

3.7 A regional approach to developing foundation degrees

The example below demonstrates how a regional partnership can form the basis for the development of foundation degrees. Nine foundation degree titles (one with four pathways) have been developed in the regional partnership led by Anglia Polytechnic University, with five separate institutions. More are planning to join the partnership. Early in 2002-03 there were 400 students, including full-time and part-time students.

Foundation degrees: Anglia Polytechnic University (APU)

APU's foundation degrees are validated for use throughout the Regional University Partnership. Once validated, any member of the partnership, subject to planning protocols and centre approval, may offer them. The partnership currently consists of 19 FE and sixth form colleges in partnership with APU.

APU has validated a core template of 120 credits common to all foundation degree pathways. This template is contextualised into the industry area by the development team. A further 120 credits reflecting the industry's needs are developed, which together with the core form an integrated industry-specific pathway. Professional body recognition is an important element, and all pathways must have at least 20 per cent of the credits as work-based learning. Flexibility of delivery, APL/APEL, accessibility and widening participation are important design elements, as is a requirement for a named honours award for progression.

APU schools or partner FECs may propose a title for a new foundation degree. The title, once approved, is circulated to all partners. This affords an opportunity for partners to join a regional development group and influence the development, and ensures that what is validated will reflect the needs of the region. A relevant APU core school must be part of the development team, and provides a named honours degree onto which students from the foundation degree may progress without a bridging programme. Staff development with respect to foundation degrees and the validation process is mandatory; this is provided by APU. This staff development, together with the validated core, facilitates a one-stage validation event for the pathway. Centres, that is APU schools or regional partner colleges, may then seek approval to offer the pathway.

All foundation degree pathways validated by APU are subject to the university quality assurance processes and curriculum regulations. APU employs a foundation degree co-ordinator to manage development and operation of foundation degrees in the Regional University Partnership,

The example below of delivering contextual studies in a foundation degree validated by Manchester Metropolitan University, shows how practice can be developed and shared collaboratively.

Manchester Metropolitan University, City College Manchester, Hopwood Hall College, and Rochdale and Tameside College

The foundation degree in new media design was developed as a prototype by a consortium of three colleges: City College Manchester, Hopwood Hall College, and Rochdale and Tameside College together with the Manchester Metropolitan University. Contextual studies has been seen as the lynchpin of the foundation degree, enabling the validating university to ensure an appropriate academic standard and a context for developing transferable skills. The unit devised for the second semester set out to develop an awareness of Manchester's cultural industries. The process was as follows:

- lectures outlined the context, growth and activities of the city's cultural, design and media industries
- the students were asked to explore and contextualise a chosen example of creative design work developed there today
- the unit specifications and briefs were developed by one college and shared with the other two. A collaborative delivery process was made possible by a common cross-site slot on the timetables of all three colleges agreed at a very early stage
- the course teams found they could follow the first unit in a mode appropriate to the curricular strengths of their own colleges
- they participated in planning meetings to develop a common second unit for the second semester.

The colleges prepared for the collaboration by:

- holding four recorded meetings between December 2001 and February 2002
- scheduling only the first few weeks of the unit initially to allow for flexibility
- agreeing to take responsibility for different areas and allocating class topics
- putting in place outside speakers who would spearhead the first half of the unit
- constantly using e-mail to continue the planning and dialogue.

Initiating the collaborative unit

The colleges pooled contacts and invited two active design practitioners and two specialist speakers to illustrate and contextualise their themes. Manchester Metropolitan University provided a venue which promoted the collaboration. Practical arrangements for travel were planned early, but course details were left open and not disseminated until the true direction evolved.

Students appreciated the common ground established by group work among the three cohorts, which shared and compared their parallel experiences.

Further development

The schedule was renegotiated after consultation and in response to the material presented. On a weekly basis, the staff were able to discuss and modify the programme plan. Successful strategies were repeated, for example mixing the cohorts in group work. And regular news-sheets describing `where we are now` ensured that the common direction was not lost.

Problems to solve:

- accommodation/equipment problems needed weekly solutions and an on-site contact
- in two colleges it proved difficult to link up with other units to maximise resources
- after good participation and attendance, there was a fall-off in numbers after seven weeks and,

with the approaching deadlines, the last two sessions were cancelled
- the lack of a planned framework for college calendars/dates/trips caused problems
- planning did not extend to embedding collaboration on the assessment procedures
- some speakers were unreliable, changing dates for example, but this was generally solved by improvisation.

Key enabling elements:
- the e-mail dialogue was indispensable
- the project manager acted as facilitator, which is invaluable in a collaborative venture
- a subject specialist led the planning and many sessions, which avoided too much indecision
- all the staff involved pitched in; everyone seemed confident that the others would help out
- group work for students was a uniting force, and vocationally valuable
- guest speakers provided a uniting focus
- the common delivery slot facilitated both collaboration and smooth consultation.

Impact on the students

The collaboration gave them a feeling of being involved in something special. In particular the group work validated the unit and confirmed the foundation degree identity of the students. This was reinforced by the neutral and prestige venue at Manchester Metropolitan University.

By mixing and sharing with others, students were able to compare experiences. Team teaching also enlarges their experience.

What needs to be done

The partners need to address the fact that the mix of fractional, part-time and full-time staff in the team made it difficult to delegate responsibilities. They also need to find solutions to the disruption to staff: at present the process is too dependent on goodwill.

Closer liaison is needed between the colleges over dates and unit planning. They will also be exploring the online potential, which could make mark two of this unit look quite different.

3.8 HEIs and FECs working effectively together

The degree to which an HEI is involved when a new programme is developed or an existing programme is changed will vary according to:
- how close the links are at the subject level
- the length of time the two institutions have worked together
- how many partners are involved
- whether the programme is to be validated or franchised
- how open the institutions are with each other.

The most productive arrangements are those where:
- the purpose of the development is clear and important to both sides
- the development makes appropriate use of the strengths of each institution
- there is sufficient time to discuss the academic nature of the programme
- there is a clear action plan with timescales and responsibilities
- the links at subject and course level are strong

- problems are discussed openly at an early stage
- funding is allocated and agreed at an early stage.

Blackburn College, and Blackpool & the Fylde College

The University of Lancaster validates the degrees of two large colleges in its region, Blackburn and Blackpool & the Fylde. When a new programme is proposed, the HEI appoints a course consultant to work with the college on the design and development. This connection does not stop after validation. Staff development takes place, and support is given to the new programme staff to introduce them to or extend their knowledge of a research culture.

Administrative staff are also involved in the agreement of academic regulations, with appropriate staff development.

As the relationship has grown, the HEI has invited one college to provide consultants to sit on the validation panel that considered whether an art and design programme was academically coherent and of the expected standard.

QAA report

Carlisle College, Engineering, May 2002

'Staff associated with lecturing on the new BSc (Hons) Industrial Systems Engineering final year will receive support both from the University of Sunderland, whose lecturers will deliver the specific lecture material, and from the college – as the staff will be allocated time to shadow the university lecturers during the first delivery of the material.'

Peterborough Regional College

For the past three years, Peterborough Regional College has built into all its new HE programmes an accredited (20 credits) graduate skills module (or professional skills for foundation degrees). Its development generated great debate among the staff teaching on the programmes about the nature, development and assessment of graduate skills (as opposed to key skills).

A research group has been established (funded by the HEFCE Development Fund), and mentored by the HE/FE adviser from the University of Loughborough. This aims to:

- look at the skills deficit of students entering with non-standard qualifications and how to overcome it
- monitor the development of skills that students are expected to have acquired by the time they graduate.

For an account of dealing with potential skills deficits at Somerset College of Arts and Technology, see **Section 6.5**.

4 Assessment

The QAA code of practice has 10 sections for assuring quality and standards in higher education. FE colleges should be able to show how they have considered the precepts of four sections of the code as part of academic review. They include Section 6: Assessment of students, and Section 4: External examining. This is not a question of compliance: the precepts provide guidance for what is seen as good practice in these areas. This section covers some of the assessment precepts.

4.1	QAA comments on assessment
4.2	General principles
4.3	Assessment regulations
4.4	Academic appeals
4.5	Internal moderation/verification
4.6	Writing assessments
4.7	Assessment methods
4.8	Peer assessment
4.9	Working with Edexcel

4.1 QAA comments on assessment

The overview reports for QAA subject reviews 1998-2000 have identified the assessment component of teaching, learning and assessment as one of the priorities for improvement, along with quality management and enhancement. This applies to HEIs and FECs alike.

The QAA identified the following main areas to improve in student assessment:

- clarity of assessment criteria
- consistent application of assessment criteria
- clarity of rules for progression
- match between assessment and planned learning outcomes
- clear differentiation of grade or mark bandings
- articulation of assessment questions
- consistency of oral feedback
- quantity and quality of written feedback
- prompt return of marked work.

<u>What evidence might institutions need to provide for external scrutiny?</u>

Information on:

- the assessment strategy
  - assessment process
  - assessment criteria
  - guidance to markers
  - external examiners'/verifiers' reports
  - procedures for monitoring and recording achievement
  - examination board minutes
- samples of students' work with marks and feedback
- assessment questions/briefs
- guidance on providing feedback to students.

4.2 General principles

The reasons for assessment include the need to:

- assure academic standards
- improve learning
- motivate learning
- provide feedback (for students and staff) to lead to an improvement in performance
  - find strengths
- correct errors
- consolidate learning
- provide information for progression – to employers and HEI admission tutors.

Assessment materials

The Learning and Teaching Support Network (LTSN) generic web-site, www.ltsn.ac.uk, has a range of materials on assessment that will be extremely useful to colleges.

Since many disciplines have their own pedagogy of assessment (such as art and design and computing), it is also worth looking at the LTSN subject centres.

Assessment strategy

An assessment strategy needs to address the following points:

- why, in the context of the programme's aims and outcomes, that range of assessment methods was selected
- how the pattern of assessment supports the development of students and their learning
- how the strategy addresses the balance between the demands made of students in terms of their workload and independent learning at different levels
- the relationship to the intended learning outcomes but also to the teaching and learning strategies used
- how the teaching and learning strategy prepares students to cope with assessment. For example, if presentations are used, the students need to develop the skills to make presentations.

Key features of assessment

The assessment strategy should incorporate the following key features, showing why assessment is carried out in a particular way.

There should be a policy on assessment which includes a statement on systematic internal moderation/verification and external standard setting and/or scrutiny, including second marking and anonymous marking.

Four elements need to be aligned:

- level descriptors
- grade descriptors
- assessment criteria
- the assignment brief or assessment task.

Assessments should be appropriate to the learning, and evaluated and reviewed on a regular basis to ensure that they are clear and allow evidence to be generated to meet the standard.

All assessment instruments – including tests, projects and examinations – should be presented clearly with assessment criteria in direct relation to clearly specified learning outcomes. It is good practice for them to be internally moderated/verified.

An assessment schedule should be discussed by all staff teaching on the programme, and made available to students so they can plan their workload in a manageable way across the whole programme. Necessary amendments should be notified and/or negotiated. Students should also be given an indication of when they can expect their assessed work to be returned.

There are a variety of informal and formal assessment methods, ranging from initial diagnostic tests, through internally set formative assessments to summative assessment externally moderated on a periodic sampling basis. The assessments used should cover a sufficient range of instruments and methods to suit a variety of learning styles to offer all students the opportunity to achieve. Students with disabilities must not be disadvantaged, so the subject team may need to explore alternative methods of assessment (see **Section 6.8**).

The specific roles of diagnostic, formative and summative assessment need to be clear.

The purpose and requirements of assessment should be clearly communicated to students at various stages of their experience at college, beginning with pre-course advice and induction. Students and staff (especially those involved in an assessment they have not designed) should understand what students need to do to achieve a particular grading.

Consideration should be given to whether marks rather than grades are appropriate.

Course teams benefit from maximising opportunities for feedback on the students' experience of assessment (through surveys, unit/module evaluations, group discussion and tutorials) to inform annual course reviews and associated action plans.

Mechanisms need to be in place to deal with breaches of assessment regulations and appeals against assessment decisions.

Assessed student work needs to be archived for one year, especially if a QAA subject review is planned.

Northbrook College

Assessment policy

Assessment is at the heart of the learning experience of students. Assessment motivates students and drives their learning. It determines their progression through their programmes and validates their success or failure in meeting programme objectives. It is assessment that provides the main basis of public recognition of achievement and gives it its value and marketability.

Assessment is usually construed as being either diagnostic, formative or summative.

Diagnostic assessment aims to identify attributes or skills in the learner that

suggest appropriate pathways of study, or to identify learning difficulties that require support and resolution.

Formative assessment is designed to enable the learner to obtain feedback on his/her progress in meeting stated objectives and reviewing goals.

Summative assessment provides the means whereby a clear statement of achievement or failure can be made in respect of a student's performance in relation to stated objectives.

Any assessment method can, and often does, involve more than one of these elements. So, for example, much coursework is formative in that it provides an opportunity for students to be given feedback on their level of attainment, but also often counts towards the credit being accumulated for a summative statement of achievement. An end-of-module or end-of-programme written examination is designed primarily to result in a summative judgement on the level of attainment the student has reached; but the result, and discussion around it, can be formative. Both formative and summative assessment can have a diagnostic function. Assessment primarily aimed at diagnosis is intrinsically formative though it would rarely contribute towards a summative judgement.

St Helen's College

Code of assessment practice

Assessment should enable students to demonstrate that they have fulfilled the learning outcomes of a unit/module/course of study and achieved the standard required for their award/course.

The design of the assessment should make effective use of student and staff time.

The purpose and objectives of assessment should be clearly identified and related to the stated learning outcomes of units/modules/courses.

Relevant assessment criteria should be identified and communicated to all those being assessed and to those conducting the assessment. If the explanation is verbal, arrangements must be made to update anyone absent from the session.

Assessment methods should be appropriate to the unit/module/course objectives and capable of testing the learning outcomes.

The practice of assessment should be objective, impartial, consistent and free of bias.

Assessment outcomes should be communicated to students with appropriate feedback to support the learning process.

All higher education courses should produce a student handbook, which contains, *inter alia,* assessment regulations.

Any penalties related to assignment deadlines must be described clearly in the student handbook and enforced consistently.

Key elements of an assessment schedule

The assessment schedule should demonstrate:

- how many assessments are in each unit/module
- weightings of separate assessments
- submission dates
- that there is no under-assessment or over-assessment
- a range of instruments of assessment
- a range of methods of assessment
- that the needs of students with disabilities have been accommodated
- a manageable workload for students
- a published timetable.

The whole course team needs to make time to discuss and agree the assessment schedule because any member of staff could unwittingly affect it.

4.3 Assessment regulations

Students have the right to know what the assessment regulations are and the responsibility to abide by them. Any regulations should be clearly described in the course handbook and the programme specification. They may differ between BTEC HND/HNC programmes and degrees, so the course team must be clear what needs to be covered. For degree courses, most colleges will use the assessment/academic regulations of the validating institution.

Many colleges have developed their own assessment regulations, which might differ according to the kind of HE provision.

St Helen's College

Contents of assessment regulations

1 General principles of assessment
- 1.1 Fulfilment of programme objectives
- 1.2 Confirmation of standards
- 1.3 Assessors and assessors' judgement
- 1.4 Basic requirements of assessment regulations for programmes of study
- 1.5 Modification to individual programme assessment regulations

2 Application of the regulations

3 Programme management committees
- 3.1 Responsibilities of programme management committees
- 3.2 Membership of programme management committees
- 3.3 Mitigation, illness and absence
- 3.4 Appeals

4 Progression, failure and awards
- 4.1 Eligibility for assessment
- 4.2 Conditions for progression
- 4.3 Conditions for awards: final stage assessment
- 4.4 Referral opportunities
- 4.5 Reassessment opportunities
- 4.6 Aegrotat awards

5 Conduct of assessments including invigilated examinations

Appendix A: Rules for the conduct and invigilation of written examinations
- Responsibilities of the student
- Requirements for examinations
- Responsibilities of invigilators for procedures for the conduct of examinations
- Untoward circumstances

Appendix B: Acceptable arrangements which may be made for the assessment of students with known disabilities

Appendix C: Academic impropriety
- Definitions: cheating; plagiarism; collusion
- Procedures to be followed in cases of suspected cheating
- Procedures to be followed in cases of suspected plagiarism and collusion
- Appeals procedures

The following statement from Edexcel might affect college's policies on submission dates and action taken in relation to missed deadlines.

> 'Edexcel centres are encouraged to have an assessment policy which is published to students. This policy should include any rules about deadlines for the submission of work. However once the work is accepted for assessment it must be assessed against the published criteria and cannot be marked down i.e. a Distinction piece of work cannot be given a Pass.
>
> 'In the current BTEC Higher Nationals, centres can make use of the common skill 'Managing own self' to penalise the students for late submission, which could ultimately result in the student achieving a low grade for that common skill or indeed failing the common skill and therefore the qualification as a whole.
>
> 'It is in the nature of the qualification that many units require business or professional related skills to be demonstrated. The handing in of work to set deadlines is a requirement within the world of work and this can be reflected in the assessment and grading criteria for the related assessment.'

The weighting of assessments is used for a range of reasons, for example, to allocate more marks developmentally and progressively or for different kinds of learning. Any weightings should be made clear in the unit/module guide.

Reading College

We have re-weighted the reflective practice module from 15 to 20 credits on the graphic design BA, so it is now worth more than the dissertation module. We felt that this was a fairer indicator of students' development throughout the course and their understanding and use of the medium.

The course ethos is about facilitating practitioners of graphic design, over theoreticians writing on graphic design. We worked in liaison with staff at Oxford Brookes on this initiative and they are keen to see how it progresses – they have been thinking on similar lines themselves.

Academic honesty

Colleges need to ensure that there is a policy on academic honesty or plagiarism that is clearly stated in the course handbook. A self-declaration on work to be submitted can be helpful.

City College Manchester: Arden School of Theatre

Students now submit all work with a top sheet which gives details of the module, name, and date and must incorporate the following statement.

Statement of academic honesty

This work is entirely my own. The words it contains are my words and, where it has been necessary to use someone else's words, I have accurately attributed them to the writer or speaker who created them.

Some colleges insist that any assessments with definite answers, for example in mathematics, should be done in class.

The Joint Information Systems Committee (JISC) has funded projects on plagiarism (see www.jisc.ac.uk) and offers an advisory service: www.jiscpas.ac.uk.

4.4 Academic appeals

There should be a formal procedure for students to appeal against assessment decisions. The following example is from Northbrook College whose degrees are validated by the Open University Validation Service.

Northbrook College

HE (OUVS) academic appeals against the Final Examination Board

As a general rule decisions made by the Final Examination Board cannot be overturned. Decisions may only be reviewed in exceptional circumstances. The Academic Board Appeals Panel, as authorised by the Academic Board, may in the following circumstances require the Final Examination Board to reconsider its decision if:

- a candidate requests such a reconsideration and establishes to the satisfaction of the Academic Board Appeals Panel that his or her performance in the examination was adversely affected by illness or other factors which he or she was unable, or for valid reasons unwilling, to divulge before the Final Examination Board reached its decision. The candidate's request must be supported by medical certificates or other documentary evidence acceptable to the Academic Board

- the Academic Board Appeals Panel is satisfied on evidence produced by the candidate or any other person that there has been a material administrative error, or that the examinations were not conducted in accordance with the current regulations for the course, or that some other material irregularity relevant to the assessments has occurred.

Disagreement with the academic judgement of the Final Examination Board in assessing the merits of an individual piece of work or in reaching any assessment decision based on the marks, grades and other information relating to a candidate's performance cannot in itself constitute grounds for a request for reconsideration by a candidate.

A candidate who wishes to appeal should within three days of the publication of grades inform the divisional manager, who will advise the candidate whether there are valid grounds for appeal. Should the candidate not reach agreement with the divisional manager as to the validity of the grounds, a decision will be made by the convenor of the Academic Board Appeals Panel.

The Academic Board Appeals Panel shall convene within one month of receipt of an appeal, and shall communicate its decision to the candidate and the divisional manager within five working days. The decision will be reported to the Academic Board at its next meeting.

The Academic Board Appeals Panel shall comprise the unit manager responsible for quality assurance, as convenor, together with a divisional manager from a division other than that involved in the appeal, and a programme manager from the division involved but from a different programme area.

4.5 Internal moderation/verification

A number of terms are used in colleges and HEIs to describe the process by which course teams ensure that their assessments are fair, consistent, comparable with teaching teams in their own and other institutions, and meet national standards. Although they have slightly different meanings, institutions describe this process as moderation, standardisation or verification, and it is a useful way of sharing practice.

Colleges with Edexcel programmes are required to use internal verification systems to ensure the appropriateness and security of assessment, and to ensure that assessment meets national

standards. Since internal verification schemes were originally developed to meet NVQ requirements, some colleges have refined or adapted their FE procedures to fit higher education programmes.

Internal standardisation usually occurs in two ways:

- moderation of the assignment or examination paper to ensure that the learning outcomes are met, the assessment criteria are clear, and the task is appropriate, and that students will understand what they have to do to achieve
- moderation of assessed student work: either all the student work or a sample is double marked to ensure consistency of standards within a team or across similar student groups. In some colleges, any comments made by the second marker are written on the feedback sheets and made available to students. This process is also called cross-marking or second marking.

Anonymous marking, also called blind marking, is another way of assuring standards because pre-knowledge of students cannot influence the assessment.

Good practice includes a number of assessment methods and several ways of marking, including self-assessment, peer or team assessment, to ensure the broadest possible moderation of standards.

Edexcel requires some work from each assessor to be internally verified and checked by the external verifier.

Bridgewater College

Bridgewater College organises a verification day for each course team, including part-time staff. They look at assessments, have samples available, and expect clear mark schemes and model answers for essay assessments.

University of Plymouth

The University of Plymouth has seven partner colleges and organises cross-moderation events between the colleges and across subjects. Module leaders meet and moderate each other's assessments. This addresses over-grading and over-assessment.

City of Bristol College

Assessment activity brief – checklist for quality

Assessment features are identified, commented on and signed off by the lecturer and internal moderator:

- title
- clearly defined tasks – are they understandable without further input?
- tasks linked to learning outcomes?
- grading criteria contextualised?
- knowledge requirements met?
- group or individual work?
- tasks set at an appropriate level for HE?
- appropriate/varied assessment methods?
- realistic deadlines set?
- realistic/authentic material?
- the assessment is practical in terms of resources and staff?
- the assessment is free from bias and supportive of equal opportunity?

4.6 Writing assessments

Course teams need to think about the language used to write assessments so that students will understand what they have to do. An assessment couched in the language of academic discourse might be appropriate to a final year student but can be very intimidating to one starting a higher education course. A planned approach to introducing the language of the discipline progressively will give students a better chance of achieving the learning outcomes.

Learning support staff are often called upon to deconstruct or interpret assignment briefs because they are not written in language students can easily understand. This can also happen when the brief is overly long.

Some of the time spent agreeing an assignment is usefully spent reviewing the language as well as the assessment design. A clear, concise style will make students feel comfortable with what they are being asked to do. Straightforward language can still require sophisticated activities.

University of Gloucestershire

The university shares its good practice with its partner colleges. A detailed brief is followed by a bullet point checklist at the end, asking students: Have you [fulfilled each of the requirements]..?

Setting the level of an assessment is also important and needs to be discussed. Course teams may find it useful to consult the level descriptors of the QAA framework for higher education qualifications to ensure that the level of the assessment is sufficiently challenging (see **Section 2.1**)

4.7 Assessment methods

The following list gives the range of assessment methods identified in the QAA subject benchmark statements. It provides a potentially rich, cross-discipline resource from which to identify alternative methods for assessing learning outcomes. It is taken from SENDA 'Compliance in higher education –

an audit and guidance tool for accessible practice within the framework of teaching and learning'. This can be downloaded from the web at www.plymouth.ac.uk/disability.

Analytical exercises
Briefings
Computer-based assessment and exercises
Continuous assessment
Coursework with discussion elements
Critical diaries, learning logs and journals
Critiques
Data interpretation exercises
Design tasks
Dissertation
Documentation
Electronic presentations: CD, web pages etc
Essay assignments
Examinations (open book)
Examinations (seen)
Examinations (take away)
Examinations (unseen)
Exhibition and poster displays
Extended investigations (eg, statistical)
Fieldwork reports
Finding primary source material
Geological mapping
'In class' and module tests
Internship diaries
Laboratory practical reports
Laboratory examinations and practical tests
Multiple choice testing
On-line assessment
Optical mark reader assessments
Oral examinations
Placement or exchange reports
Peer and self-evaluation
Personal research projects
Portfolios and sketchbooks
Practical reports
Problem based learning
Projects, independent or group
Sandwich year reports
Simulation exercises
Slide and picture tests
Student-led seminars, presentations and discussions
Synoptic examinations
Treatment reports
Video formats
Viva voce examinations
Work books
Work experience report

Assessment methods should be appropriate to the learning outcomes and the assessment criteria. When constructing the programme specification, assessment strategies (along with teaching and learning strategies) should be clearly linked to the learning outcomes. An example is the following brief extract from a programme specification in computing at Stockport College.

Stockport College	
Skills and other attributes B Intellectual (thinking) skills – [the student should be] able to: B1) Analyse and solve computing problems B2) Design complex information systems that require the use of the principles and tools of information system design B3) Identify a range of solutions and critically evaluate the proposed solutions	Teaching and learning methods The analysis and problem-solving skills (B1) are developed through lectures, coursework, projects and computer laboratories. Students apply the skills to simple and well-defined problems in the first part of their first year of study. This is followed, in part two of year one and throughout the rest of the programme, by the application of these skills to fairly complex problems. Students gain design and evaluation skills (B2 & B3) through mainly coursework, computer laboratories, and projects. Students exercise these skills in various assignments and consolidate the skills in their final year projects.

	Assessment Analysis and problem-solving skills are assessed through coursework, time-constrained assignments and projects. Design skills are assessed through computer laboratories and projects. Evaluation skills are assessed through coursework, projects, time-constrained assignments and presentations.

The following are commonly used assessment methods:

- examination
- case study
- essay
- reports
- posters
- role play
- applying understanding to a particular situation
- practical
- observation
- group work
- peer assessment
- dissertations and projects
- recap quiz
- presentations
- vivas.

Issues to consider:

- gender – men respond better to objective/multiple choice tests than women; women do better with essays
- assessment strategies need to take account of different learning styles
- assessment must take account of students with disabilities
- assessment should offer a mix across the whole programme, not just individual units/modules
- students should have the opportunity to demonstrate the full range of abilities and skills
- if assessments are planned carefully then this can minimise problems elsewhere, for example with plagiarism. An assessment that is closely related to specific curriculum design or delivery will not lend itself to indiscriminate quoting from texts or downloading from the Internet
- creative/innovative assessment methods take more time to set up and conduct.

(Thanks to Professor Michael Bradford, Pro Vice-Chancellor at the University of Manchester, who gave permission for a number of points to be included from his lecture on assessment to the annual conference for affiliated institutions in July 2002.)

4.8 Peer assessment

Peer assessment has led to some debate. It is generally agreed that it is good practice to get students to assess their own and others' work, to devise criteria and make judgements. On the other hand, it can lead to some tensions, especially if the assessment is the result of group work.

Moray College

Peer assessment is one of the approaches used on the BA fine art course at Moray College and one which has proved to be beneficial for the students involved. Where they have been engaged on a common project, they are invited to assess one another's work. This exercise has been carried out with first and second-year students and includes a requirement to design their own assessment criteria.

Student groups are usually quick to organise a system of marking, and discover for themselves reasons to employ weighting and grade criteria. They have demonstrated efficient teamwork and, whilst every group tends to have evident leaders, all members participate actively, often contributing to lively debate on issues such as fairness and standards. Observing them in action, as their lecturer, I have been impressed by how focused they can be on the task, and how seriously they take their responsibilities. There have, for instance, been occasions when they have spontaneously entered into 'moderation' when they detected discrepancies in their judgements.

As with other forms of assessment, an important aspect of this exercise is the feedback session that follows. The students are asked to explain the criteria they have applied and give a critical appraisal of each piece of work along with the marks. This is usually done with refreshing honesty but great sensitivity. Those involved often comment on finding it much more difficult and demanding than they had anticipated, but say that active participation gives them a real understanding and appreciation of the process.

City College Manchester

Tutor feedback: HND music performance (Merit grade)
'Mountie' is a cheeky and well delivered blues with a strong stamp of femininity. You have derived and applied the essence of blues feel and formula with some effective breaks eg the stop pre guitar solo. The 12/8 feel also works well giving an appropriate blues swing to the piece. Your vocal line is appropriately bluesy and the vocal break at the end with the harmony on the vocals is a fitting end to what is a standard blues formula.

'My Words' was a suitably contrasting tune with some effective musical and production ideas. I like the vocal interaction which helps create an element of confusion and excitement for the listener. I feel the instrumentation ideas could have been developed further, however, especially in the earlier stages of the song. The vocal interaction ideas could also have been applied to other instruments for interest and variation – eg develop the guitar ideas further to avoid the straight funky strum idea. The breakdown to the shaker and use of space was effective but I feel this could have moved on a little more quickly. Always be careful that parts have long enough to get established but don't outstay their usefulness and effectiveness.

Overall you provided an effective result. Try to develop other melodic instrumental ideas in your composition as well as vocal ideas (this clearly comes first with this being your first instrument but do endeavour to develop your use and understanding of the roles and uses of other instruments also).

City College Manchester

Tutor feedback: HND Travel & Tourism (Pass grade)
On the whole, a good piece of work. Some sections are significantly stronger than others, notably functions of management and culture. Very good outline of the functions. You would have benefited from applying these functions to the management of CCM Ltd, with critique.
Again, good application to the three organisations and coherently put.

Areas to improve:
1. Table of contents and introduction (see above).
2. Overall format of report. Write in paragraphs which have logical progression, not stand alone sentences.
3. Try to compare and contrast theories, ie, types of structure and management theories.
4. Provide more application to the tourism industry and give examples.

Progression requirements
Students need to know what is required for them to progress from an HND or foundation degree to the second or third year of a degree. (See the University of Plymouth's materials on Student progression and transition: www.spat.ac.uk.) They also need to be clear about possible exemptions from professional bodies' awards.

4.9 Working with Edexcel

During QAA subject reviews there have been a number of tensions, especially when subject specialist reviewers are not familiar with Edexcel and its systems. Edexcel has been meeting with the QAA to see how to address some of the issues that have arisen.

There is some difference in terminology. For example, in further education *benchmarks* are national pass rates; for the QAA they are statements about subjects that represent the threshold for undergraduate programmes. There are no specific QAA subject benchmark statements for Higher National programmes although some of the published statements do apply to BTEC Higher Nationals. They will be taken into account as the BTEC Higher Nationals are updated for submission to the QCA national qualifications framework.

Regulated BTEC Higher Nationals will sit within the national qualifications framework and are expected to be transparent to any end user. In order to achieve this, the QCA requires that qualifications meet the published design principles.

The external responsibility for quality assurance on colleges rests with OFSTED, the Adult Learning Inspectorate (ALI) and the QAA, each from a very different standpoint – inspection versus peer review.

In spite of these inherent difficulties and potential confusions, it is Edexcel's intention to:
- root HND/HNCs in the intermediate level of the QAA framework
- address the issue of credits, particularly important for students progressing onto top-up degrees (2+2 or 2+1) as national credit frameworks are developed
- explore the potential of introducing external examiners to independent assessment for BTEC Higher Nationals, to bring them closer to HE models.

Current issues for colleges delivering Higher Nationals

Supporting a large number of option units (optional to the centre not the student) with specialist content is difficult. Not many FECs can offer a real choice of these.

Many of the current specifications were revised in 1998 and some, such as the computing qualifications, are rapidly getting out of date. The intention is to review and redesign the specifications for 2003 in such a way that they should not become out of date. Edexcel sees it as essential to ensure that the portfolio of units is fit for purpose, and reflects sector responsibilities and workforce development plans.

Centre-devised units offer scope for keeping up-to-date and meeting local needs. Edexcel anticipates that the use of 'centre choice' units will continue once the BTEC Higher Nationals are accredited to the national qualifications framework.

Guidance for the new specifications will be written with QAA practices in mind – the qualifications framework, programme specifications and the code of practice for assuring academic quality and standards.

Generic criteria for pass, merit and distinction will be strengthened, and there will be better guidance about how to apply the grades. It is good practice to have clear grading assessment criteria on the assignment.

Units should be seen holistically to avoid over-assessment. Integrated units that meet all the outcomes can make for a more coherent learning experience.

The Edexcel guidance to tutors is carefully crafted. The language is particularly important, ranging from *advised* to *must*.

Edexcel works with National Training Organisations, Sector Skills Councils and employers to meet occupational standards. Staff from FECs are involved in the development of new or revised specifications.

5 Marketing for recruitment

5.1	What does marketing mean?
5.2	Research
5.3	Networks and liaison
5.4	Textual and on-line information
5.5	Recruitment, referral and progression

5.1 What does marketing mean?

The term marketing refers to the set of activities which aims to promote the college in a competitive environment. This can involve market research to support the development of new courses, attendance at special events, contact with former students or, most frequently, publicity. This section is mainly about marketing in the sense of promotion. For information about market research as part of curriculum development, see **Section 3.4**. Depending on the college's strategy, different approaches may be needed to marketing HE programmes.

The message:

- be confident and positive about the HE provision. FE has much to offer in terms of flexibility, levels of support, and an innovative approach to course development. Successful marketing is likely to be confident in tone and clear about the value of studying at HE level within an FE college
- ensure that student support staff as well as course leaders see the draft materials to be certain that they convey an accurate message about the experience that students will have and the support they can receive
- tell potential students how they can find up-to-date information on the financial implications of studying at HE level, including crèche provision, and travel subsidies
- make clear the progression routes open to students when they complete a course in the college, and their employment prospects.

5.2 Research

For most HE courses, the validation submission document will require details of the anticipated student market. The college can be proactive by:

- systematic gathering of evidence through contacts with employers, professional organisations, schools, community organisations and existing students
- close liaison with outreach workers and other college staff who are active externally
- approaching the local Regional Development Agency if employer links are less well developed. Organisations such as Business Link or the Sector Skills Councils, whose role is to gather and collate labour market intelligence on a regular basis, will also provide useful information (see also **Sections 3.4 and 3.6**)
- keeping up-to-date on how the HEFCE funding methodology encourages colleges to target under-represented groups of students.

5.3 Networks and liaison

Word-of-mouth promotion, by both students and professionals, is often the most effective way of marketing courses at local level. Local networks are a highly effective way of spreading information. Developing and sustaining them systematically enables ready dissemination of up-to-date information.

Although outreach and marketing are distinct (the former aimed at raising aspirations rather than promoting one particular institution), the two areas should liaise to ensure consistent and sensitive messages are conveyed, and that inclusivity is a clear message in all HE programme marketing materials. Outreach staff should also be able to provide accurate information on progression opportunities and the financial implications of HE study, which is one of the first enquiries usually made (see **Section 6.10**).

Filton College

Filton College has developed outreach work in local communities in Bristol. It believes that it needs to use local people to teach local people – those who will have credibility with the target group.

The college also works with primary and secondary schools in various ways. For example, it runs a series of life drawing events for secondary school pupils and their teachers on a Saturday morning to offer:

- an experience of HE teaching
- a purposeful activity contributing to students' academic success
- marketing of the college and its courses to both prospective students and their teachers.

Make sure that careers services and Connexions partnerships are kept fully informed of developments at the college, and invite them in on a regular basis to visit the provision.

Ensure that local HEI guidance services are kept informed about the provision. A significant amount of referral across institutions takes place at this level, even in the current competitive environment.

A graduation event for HE students is very popular with students and their families, and an ideal marketing opportunity.

Alumni associations enable colleges to use student success to market higher education provision effectively. Information on the destination of graduates is now required for the HEFCE-funded courses, and this can also be a valuable source of information on which to develop an association linking former students and keeping track of their progress.

Examples of alumni associations on the web are:

- Liverpool Institute for the Performing Arts, www.lipa.ac.uk
- Rose Bruford College, www.bruford.ac.uk
- Birmingham College of Food, Tourism and Creative Studies, www.bcftcs.ac.uk.

5.4 Textual and on-line information

Carefully-targeted publicity in local (or national) newspapers and journals may attract wide attention. Identify those which are likely to reach the target audience, then produce a press-release , and write a 'human interest' story on the experience of some students (with their permission).

Where funds are limited, consider working in partnership with other local institutions to market the range of HE programmes available in an attractive and comprehensive brochure, or on a regional web-site such as uni4me.com. Every region has a HEFCE-funded HE consortium (for contact details see HEFCE 2002/03).

Inclusion in the annual Universities and Colleges Admissions Service (UCAS) Handbook will reach a national audience for colleges where a niche area of provision is being developed (www.ucas.ac.uk). Writing the UCAS profile for all the college's courses gives considerably more space to describe them and target specific groups.

It is advisable to incorporate a disclaimer into any publicity to cover the college if a course is withdrawn or has to be changed. The following is an example:

> 'This prospectus is prepared well in advance of the academic year to which it relates. Consequently, details of programmes offered may vary with staff changes, and fees payable may be affected by inflation or national changes. The college therefore reserves the right to make such alterations to programmes and fees as are found to be necessary. If the college makes an offer of a place, it is essential that you are aware of the current terms on which the offer is based. If you are in any doubt, please feel free to ask for confirmation of the precise position for the year in question, before you accept the offer.'

Ensure that the college's HE web-site is up-to-date and attractive. (This could be an ideal student project.) The web-site should incorporate a range of links to further sources of information, including student support and employment opportunities.

Use national events such as Adult Learners Week to promote the college's HE courses. This takes place in May each year. Contact the National Institute for Adult Continuing Education (www.niace.org.uk) for further information and contact details of regional co-ordinators.

Macclesfield College

The college gives publicity about the foundation degree in business to all its level 3 business students who are going on work experience, to pass on to the human resources department of their placement.

5.5 Recruitment, referral and progression

Pre-course information

Evidence indicates that choosing the right course is a major factor influencing success, and, before enrolment takes place, colleges should make available information and guidance on all options. This may be provided by trained advisers or by course teams (see also **Section 6**, Academic advice and support: the student life-cycle).

Students applying should have access to clear advice on the application and admissions processes, including writing personal statements, and the sort of reference required. Sources of advice on courses include UCAS course profiles which map interests, attributes and experience against listed courses and give details of the admissions process. Table 7 sets out good practice on admissions.

Table 7 Good practice on admissions procedures

Element of admissions process	Good practice
Pre-entry information	Set clear criteria for selection and communicate them to applicants.
Selection	Provide feedback to applicants who are rejected. This is particularly important for local students who may not have the option of studying elsewhere.
Recruitment	Although the HE recruitment climate can be highly competitive for FECs, it is far better to recruit with integrity – students are more likely to succeed.
UCAS admissions	Participate in UCAS training courses for FE staff if available. UCAS publishes a booklet about the process for tutors. Plan the annual calendar in accordance with the standard national time-table, with a deadline of January in the year of entry.
Data collection and monitoring	Establish mechanisms to: • monitor the proportion of queries converted to intake (feed back to marketing) • enable the college to monitor the application profile and to track students through from application to entry and subsequent achievement.

Clearing

Clearing is a process led by UCAS, immediately after results of GCE A-levels and Advanced Vocational Certificates of Education (AVCEs) are published in mid-August. Courses with remaining places are advertised and students who have not been offered a higher education place may apply through the UCAS Clearing procedures or, in some cases, directly to the institution.

HE tutors must be available to talk about their courses to prospective students who telephone the college, and to ascertain their suitability. A friendly welcome, clear information and efficient referral processes can make all the difference to students who may be ringing several institutions. It is also, obviously, advisable to have in place the means whereby decisions can be made and communicated rapidly to potential students.

Many colleges recruit a majority of their HND students during and soon after Clearing. A number of colleges are not members of UCAS, and depend upon recruiting at this time. This unpredictable method of recruiting sits uneasily with a funding method which allocates a target number of places. Furthermore, the drive to meet targets can sometimes lead to insufficient attention being paid to matching the student to the appropriate course, resulting in higher withdrawal rates and lower achievement.

Table 8 sets out some elements of good practice.

Table 8 Good practice in relation to progression, withdrawal and transfer

Stage in progression	Good practice
Students progressing on to the next level within the FEC or to an HEI (for example, HND to 2+1 or 2+2), or from level 1 of a degree to subsequent years	• Information on application process • Written transcript of modules completed, clearly indicating levels and grades • Support for students to familiarise themselves with a different study environment, for example, information on open days and opportunities to visit
Students seeking to withdraw or transfer	• Seek to establish cause of dissatisfaction • Refer to Student Services for independent advice on future options • Information on the implications for temporary withdrawal/transfer (finance, accommodation, future study, other options) • Information on mechanisms for temporary withdrawal and transfer, including contacting the local education authority (LEA)
Students seeking to withdraw temporarily or defer	• Discuss options which best suit their circumstances • Refer to Student Services for independent advice on options • Information on the implications for withdrawal (finance, accommodation, future study, other options) • Information on mechanisms for withdrawal, including advice to the LEA*
Students failing, or at risk of failing	• Ensure all students are aware of assessment regulations and mechanism for appeal. This is particularly important for indirectly funded provision • Ensure additional support is available via Student Services and the students' union for students wishing to argue extenuating circumstances or seeking to appeal

* Care should be taken to help the student clarify his/her status with the LEA. If the student is recorded as having left the course, this may affect eligibility for future financial support.

6 Academic advice and support: the student life-cycle

6.1 The student life-cycle
6.2 Developing awareness of HE opportunities
6.3 Choosing a course and applying
6.4 Induction
6.5 On-course support
6.6 Tutorial and academic guidance
6.7 Progress files
6.8 Support for students with disabilities
6.9 Moving on
6.10 Student financial support
6.11 Changes to student financial support
6.12 Information to students

6.1 The student life-cycle

HE provision delivered in FECs characteristically attracts young and mature students from local and regional areas. Many may be classed as 'non-traditional' HE students, in that they have qualifications and experience different from traditional A-levels and may, in some cases, come from backgrounds where there is no previous experience of higher education. In the case of mature students, they may well have been out of education for some time.

The student life-cycle is a framework which takes the stages of a student's education – from application to progression following completion – in order both to enhance the recruitment of students from non-traditional backgrounds and to ensure their success. It encourages institutions to organise their support activities around the needs of students, and helps them to measure the contribution of such activities at each stage. FECs are in a good position to offer high levels of guidance and support at each stage of this process, see Table 9.

Table 9 Support activities for each stage of the student life-cycle

Stage of the student life-cycle	Institutional support activities
Developing awareness of HE opportunities	Outreach Open days Taster events Leaflets Press releases
Choosing a course and applying	Pre-entry guidance Admissions (application and selection) Staff training Liaison with UCAS Liaison with partner HEI
Induction	Induction programme – course-related Library induction Social activities to meet other HE students
On-course support	Tutorial and academic guidance Careers guidance Learning support – study skills Dyslexia and other learning needs Support for students with disabilities Pastoral support
Moving on	Progression opportunities Careers advice Exit tutorials

For fuller discussion and examples of many of the areas in this section, see HEFCE 01/36 'Strategies for widening participation in higher education: a guide to good practice'.

6.2 Developing awareness of HE opportunities

Raising awareness

Emphasis is increasingly being placed in the HE sector on the broader set of activities designed to enable providers to engage with potential students at an early stage. Much of this has grown out of widening participation activities in HEIs. A raft of awareness-raising initiatives has been developed across the country, linking together universities with local schools, colleges, and community organisations. In many cases, colleges have already been involved as providers of HE as well as providers of post-16 education. It is hoped that this involvement will increase with the advent of the joint HEFCE/LSC Partnerships for Progression initiative.

Issues concerned with race, class, gender, age and disabilities frequently affect participation rates in attracting students to widen (and not simply increase) participation. Many institutions target under-represented groups who may not have considered higher education in the past. This means that new methods will need to be used which take account of their circumstances and how confident they feel in educational institutions.

Events aimed at raising awareness include:

- outreach in local communities
- work with primary and secondary schools to introduce younger learners to the opportunities available at HE level and to help them recognise their own potential
- taster events
- open days
- work with Connexions/the Careers Service
- work with the Information, Advice and Guidance (IAG) network
- information about opportunities and progression routes from FE to HE.

QAA report

Chichester College of Arts, Science and Technology, Computing and Engineering, June 2002

'The reviewers are confident that the college has a strategy in place to increase the number of students recruited to the engineering programmes. This includes working with local companies to help them both recruit and train young engineers.'

Potential students contacting the college for the first time need to feel that there is a common and consistent approach. Introductory events and activities should be carefully planned and integrated. Both lecturing and administrative staff should be involved in developing the guidance and information made available to new and existing students. Clear lines of referral need to be established between staff working at different levels and on different activities both within and between institutions.

Marketing activities need to be distinguished from guidance activities. The role of all teaching and administrative staff involved in these processes at this stage is to raise awareness of HE as a possibility, rather than to recruit to a specific programme. (See **Section 5**: Marketing and recruitment.)

6.3 Choosing a course and applying

Pre-entry guidance

People who are interested in studying on an HE course may be referred to college guidance staff or course tutors for more focused advice and guidance. At this point, the aspirations, needs and personal preferences of potential students are critical. These relate to:

- the kind of course they are looking for
- previous educational qualifications and experience
- the kind of experience they are seeking, in terms of location, mode, peer group, volume of work, support, employment opportunities
- any prerequisites, for example mathematics for teacher training
- articulation with other courses
- employment possibilities
- the nature of the applications process
- the financial implications of HE study

- the extent to which the courses offered by the college meet their requirements.

A dialogue at this stage will help to match students' expectations with the course for which they are applying as closely as possible.

Application and selection

Admissions and student services should work closely together to ensure that guidance staff understand the procedures both for local applications and, where appropriate, for UCAS application. UCAS offers an on-site training workshop to prepare staff for operating its processes. Staff should also be up-to-date with links with and progression possibilities to other institutions.

Students should receive consistent and comprehensive information about:

- dates and deadlines for application
- the application process
- where entry is via UCAS, how to use the UCAS handbook and how to complete the application form. This can now be done electronically.

Clearing

For those applying through Clearing, or directly to the college at the start of term, there are always risks that the pressure on the student to find a place, and the pressure on staff to fill places, mean that inappropriate offers are made (with high levels of subsequent drop-out). Whenever possible, applicants should be encouraged to make use of the college guidance service to help them reflect on their options.

The fact that it is cheaper to apply during Clearing (because direct application is free) influences some, mostly adult, students.

Admissions processes may be undertaken fully within the college, or, in the case of collaborative provision, by the admissions office of the HEI partner. In the case of collaborative provision, in which admissions are the responsibility of an HEI, the procedures should be transparent, and should support the college in planning its programmes. Keeping in touch with the students before they enrol, and being available to answer their questions, will improve recruitment and students' ability to settle in.

From the college's point of view, staff need to monitor closely the kind of students who are applying in order to understand the nature of the market. Many colleges have developed systems for recording and tracking enquiries and are able to identify which lead to applications, which lead to acceptances and which could be followed up further.

6.4 Induction

An integrated approach

The approach to induction will be influenced by how the college's HE provision is organised. However, in any model, induction activities should be carefully integrated as part of an overall strategy for student support. The traditional model consists of designated days at the start of the academic year, and includes a programme of activities and information-sharing in preparation for the year ahead. However, to be fully effective, induction processes should be embedded within the whole of the first term's activities. For

example, if the student handbook is distributed during induction, it could well be useful to return to it after a few weeks to remind students of its content and answer any queries.

Planning and review

Induction is a critical process for students, because it is likely to influence the rest of their study. It is also important for the college because of its complexity and because it flags up issues of retention. It is an opportunity to learn a great deal about how processes are experienced by students, and how they might be improved over time. Make sure to capture these lessons through student feedback and systematic review when the initial stages of the induction process are complete.

Whether HE provision is faculty-based or delivered within a designated HE centre, staff should have a common understanding of the purposes of induction for HE students and what is involved. It provides a useful focus for staff development and the establishment of cross-college guidelines. All staff who teach and support students should be involved in the planning, design and delivery of induction. This will include student support and careers staff, learning support staff, library and IT staff. Table 10 sets out some key questions to consider in induction.

Table 10 Key questions related to induction

What is the core information that all HE students need to know?	HE focused issues: • an understanding of higher education – how will it be different? • students' union – what can the FEC offer. What access have students to the union in partner HEI(s)? • academic support • access to information on HE issues – student handbook, web-sites • for students on indirectly-funded provision, an understanding of the relationship with the host HEI • course organisation, including assessment regulations, and implications for study planning • support with progression and employment • student feedback and representation. Practical issues: • financial support; availability of loan cheques • timetables (for mature students, these should ideally be available before the start of the course to enable arrangements to be made in relation to work or childcare) • access to library and IT facilities, including skills development • student support and welfare • house-hunting (for students who have come through Clearing and do not live locally) • facilities eg crèche and sports • welfare rights, housing benefit etc.

Who are the students, and what specific needs should be met?	International students: teaching and learning methods in UK, support available to improve their English. Disabled students: arrangements for support and eligibility for allowances. Mature students: childcare arrangements, financial support.
Who should be involved in the planning, delivery and review?	Teaching staff for FE and HE Administrative staff Student support staff, dealing with: • guidance • careers • library services • learning support • IT. In the case of indirectly-funded colleges, HE staff as above where practicable

Working with HEIs

For indirectly-funded provision, induction is likely to be jointly planned with the partner HEI, and the same range of staff should be involved (see Table 10). This may be a useful opportunity to develop closer links across different parts of the two institutions, and to clarify the range and level of facilities open to college students at the HEI. If the college is geographically close to the partner HEI(s), induction could be held in both institutions. Respective institutional roles and responsibilities should be clear to both staff and students.

A lively publication that students might find useful is 'If only I'd known' by Dr Peter Hawkins. Described as 'an employers' guide to making the most of higher education', it was developed by a consortium of organisations including Connexions, the Association of Graduate Recruiters and the DfES (see www.agr.org.uk under Publications/Reports and surveys).

6.5 On-course support

The key features of an effective system of on-course support are:

- a strategic approach
- practices which sustain motivation
- student feedback processes
- development of good practice
- research and evaluation.

A strategic approach

Students studying in FE are typically from a wide range of backgrounds, and, at HE level, may often be working as well as studying. FECs are generally highly student-centred and flexible. Where this involves sensitive timetabling and specific learning support, it is an excellent foundation on which to build a sound learning and teaching strategy to support the retention and success of HE students. A key feature of this strategy should be the opportunity for lecturing staff and support staff to share their expertise and insight.

For students seeking help or advice, the respective roles of teaching staff and student services should be integrated within a single clearly explained system of support.

For students progressing to HEIs to complete their qualification, the college's approach should articulate as far as possible with that of local HEIs. Student support staff and staff from local HEIs should work closely together to familiarise themselves with their respective student support structures, and to develop lines of communication and referral.

Staff might find it helpful to work with the Association of Careers Advisers in Colleges offering HE (ACACHE), www.fedpig.com/Acache, or telephone Colin Rigg on 01206 392 161.

Sheffield Hallam University Guidance Network

The Associate College Network at Sheffield Hallam University (SHU) is backed up by the SHU Guidance Network, bringing together guidance/careers staff from local colleges and LEAs on a termly basis to share information on approaches and developments. For further information, contact Cal Weatherald, e-mail C.Weatherald@shu.ac.uk

SURF (Staffordshire University Regional Federation)

In conjunction with the Staffordshire Information Advice and Guidance (IAG) partnership and Staffordshire LSC, SURF secured funding for the development of a designated careers facility in each of the Staffordshire SURF colleges. An HE careers adviser has been appointed to provide support for staff, and individual advice and guidance to potential HE students.

Research suggests that the first semester, and, for longer courses, the first year, are critical in developing the skills which underpin the longer-term success of HE students (see **Section 2.3** on academic skills).

This is the best time to undertake a skills analysis with individual students and to put in place intensive skills development to help build the confidence and expertise required at this level. This should include:

- ICT skills
- research and retrieval skills
- writing skills appropriate to the course and future study
- numeracy skills
- presentation skills
- team-working skills.

At this point specific support for particular groups of students should be put in place, including for:

- disabled students
- part-time students
- students whose first language is not English.

Sustaining motivation

The competing pressures on students at this level mean that thought should be given to building and sustaining motivation through interesting and challenging course materials that capture the imagination of students. The quality of face-to-face teaching and learning is, of course, a strength of FECs. It can be effectively built on to monitor the attendance and satisfaction of students. More importantly, students, especially those who are less confident, need early feedback on their progress in order to affirm their potential success and to identify areas of weakness, for which further support can be accessed.

Student feedback

At course level, processes of monitoring and review should be in place to build a picture of how current approaches are being experienced. This should include mechanisms for gaining regular student feedback and monitoring overall attendance patterns.

Developing good practice

Students benefit from studying in an environment in which good practice is clearly identified and shared. This includes approaches to teaching and learning, including work placement support, that are regularly open to scrutiny and review by the course team and related colleges. Many colleges find that providing regular opportunities for HE staff to meet is an effective and popular way of supporting this process. In the case of smaller colleges, this can best be achieved through linking with other HE providers, and making systematic use of good practice materials available through HEFCE, the QAA, and on the web.

Research

A strategic approach to the development of support for HE students needs to be underpinned by evaluation to assess the impact of the methods being used. Research into the use of HE Development Funding indicates that some colleges are already engaged in small pieces of research aimed at enhancing the learning experience for students.

Students from non-traditional backgrounds may need additional support in relation to study and specific learning skills.

Somerset College of Arts and Technology

At the college it is our practice to address applicants' skills deficits by specifying an FE course to follow before entering the HE programme. For example, as programme leader for the HND/HNC in computing, I will ask the student to complete the Computer Literacy and Information Technology (CLAIT) course during the summer if he/she does not have basic IT skills. Typically this will apply to mature students.

Where this approach falls down, is on late application. Unfortunately under current funding regulations, we cannot put an HE student onto an FE course concurrently, in order to supplement her/his learning. So the only option is to go to another college to sign up for CLAIT (or whatever).

In more 'extreme' cases, I ask the student to take Year 1 of the national diploma first as this will get them back into the discipline of study and hone their numeracy, communications and IT skills.

At the end of Year 1, the student will generally progress to the HE programme. At the same time, any mature students who applied directly for the national diploma will be checked for possible progress onto the HE programme after one year. Fortunately, changes in the national diploma scheme mean that the first year is now certificated separately so that the student has a real achievement despite being 'set back' a year.

Warwickshire College

The screening test we use at Warwickshire College is the key skill builder assessment diagnostic test produced by West Nottingham College.

City College Coventry

A new screening tool being used at City College, Coventry includes quick screen plus diagnostic assessment. We are screening all new full-time HE students using Target Skills, a commercial package produced by Cambridge Training & Development Ltd (www.ctad.co.uk)

QAA reports

The College of North West London, Engineering, May 2002

'A new college initiative to introduce assistant tutors into normal classes to support student learning has been welcomed by staff, and is commended by the reviewers.'

The Lakes College, Computing and Engineering, June 2002

'Many students are supportive of the role of the professional development certificate in computing as a taste of higher education. It helps them to return to education at an appropriate pace and, ultimately, to progress their careers. The reviewers believe that the extensive use of the [certificate] to facilitate access to education represents good practice in the context of the college's integrated overall provision of programmes.'

Northumberland College, Social Policy and Administration and Social Policy, April 2002

'The main difficulty for potential students is often about access to the college. This is being addressed by developing a video conferencing link with a satellite campus at Berwick and looking at the possibility of developing distance-learning modes.'

Carlisle College, Engineering, May 2002

'The use of facilitators, whose aim is to facilitate student learning, is a commendable aspect of provision. The facilitators are dedicated to specific learning centres and are primarily responsible for helping the students in their studies.'

6.6 Tutorial and academic guidance

Tutorial arrangements, both academic and pastoral, are crucial. A good relationship with a personal tutor enables students to solve any problems sooner rather than later. A tutor who knows his/her students well is able to ask about periods of non-attendance, offer advice, refer students to guidance, welfare or counselling agencies in the college, or simply remind students of their obligations and responsibilities. An open, trusting relationship with a personal tutor contributes enormously to retention and eventual achievement.

Blackpool & the Fylde College

I think we were in the fortunate position of having taught undergraduate courses for many years (these were franchised from a local university) when we came to design our own course. We were, therefore, well aware of the potential problems that mature students have in adjusting to undergraduate level work.

When we designed our BA in English (students will receive a Lancaster University degree) we were careful to design support mechanisms into the course delivery. Each student in each year has two support mechanisms – a pastoral tutor and an academic tutor.

In the first year, the pastoral tutor looks after their personal needs and delivers a weekly study skills programme. Students are expected to attend. In addition, they are allocated an academic tutor and will arrange time with this tutor to go over problems in, for example, understanding academic concepts, essay writing skills, and how to improve marks. The academic tutor covers any and all areas of the course as required and, if absolutely stumped, will refer the student back to the subject lecturer, but this is fairly rare. We find that students will sort out their own academic problems if you point them in the right direction because they are usually highly motivated.

Another area which we think has contributed to the success of the course so far is timetabling. Students get a full-time week, that is 16 hours contact time, crammed into half a week so that they can work part-time and, in a few cases, full-time on the other days of the week. They are all very appreciative of this and feel we are looking after them, which indeed we are.

The QAA review gave us a 'commendable' because these sorts of mechanisms mean that our drop-out rate is extremely low – none of our first cohort has left. They are now in year 3 and we have only lost 3 out of a total recruitment of 36.

Finally, I think it is our FE teaching background which is our greatest asset here because we have a very student-centred approach.

Warwickshire College

At Warwickshire College students are allocated a personal tutor during induction. The importance of attending tutorials is stressed. Although full-time students have more regular tutorials than part-time students, all students appreciate the value of academic guidance and pastoral care.

Full-time students have a minimum of five individual tutorials per year. They usually last about 20 minutes and are recorded and agreed by the tutor and student in a log book. If there are issues, an action plan is developed and monitored.

At the end of year 1 on HND programmes, students discuss whether they are likely to progress to an HEI or into employment. If the latter is likely, they do a work placement. The placement can be at a time of their choice. The diary and the work they do during the work placement are linked to the units they would have been doing, and assessed accordingly. It is a very flexible system.

For those students wanting to progress to an HEI, the induction of their second year covers UCAS arrangements route A and route B (for Art & design students) and they are advised as to how to apply. Close links with HEIs make direct application possible.

The support that students have in following one direction or the other is a key part of the tutorial system. Students also have group tutorials that include the dissemination of information, timetabling and attendance issues, and a student forum.

City College, Coventry

Learning styles questionnaires are completed by all our students at the start of the year. The results are discussed with their progress tutor and then recorded on the students' individual learning plans. The tutor then produces an analysis of the students' learning styles, which is issued to the course team. Hopefully, the team will then review their teaching methods and, where necessary, make changes to suit the needs of the group.

6.7 Progress files

Progress files are one of the QAA requirements, being introduced gradually and to be in place by 2005. Their introduction was recommended by the Dearing Report and developed through a consultative process led by the QAA, Universities UK, SCOP and the Scottish universities. A joint policy statement was issued in May 2000 which stated that HEIs should develop a progress file consisting of:

- a transcript recording student achievement, which should follow a common format devised by institutions collectively through their representative bodies
- a means by which students can monitor, build and reflect upon their personal development – personal development plans or personal academic development plans.

Progress files help to make the outcomes and achievements of learning in higher education more explicit, and support the concept that learning is a lifetime activity.

Details of what progress files are expected to contain are available on the QAA web-site: www.qaa.ac.uk

Stockport College

The college is piloting HE progress files with an HND and a degree programme. Regular focused meetings are monitoring student progress and supporting the two course leaders. An IT specialist is helping to convert information tracking spreadsheets into a transcript for an individual student.

One option may be to use triplicate sheets for assessment: one as a receipt for the piece of work being assessed; one provides feedback to the student; and the third is the programme manager's copy.

A critical evaluation form is being trialled to provide the vehicle for developing the 'reflective process to improve learning'.

Progress files have been issued to all students in these groups. The file will be held by the learner and used during tutorial sessions based around the critical evaluation form.

6.8 Support for students with disabilities

The post-16 sections of the Special Educational Needs and Disabilities Act 2001 (SENDA) sets out requirements which affect all FE and HE provision. Staff need to familiarise themselves with and take on board the provisions of this legislation.

The principal intent of the legislation is that students with disabilities should receive full access to education and other related provision, and should have the same opportunities as non-disabled people to benefit from whatever provision is available.

The statutory responsibility for implementing SENDA in FECs lies with the Learning and Skills Council. However, there are some aspects of HE provision in FE colleges which need special attention.

A useful publication has resulted from a HEFCE project developed by the South-West Academic Network for Disability Support (SWANDS) and co-ordinated by the University of Plymouth. 'SENDA compliance in higher education – an audit and guidance tool for accessible practice within the framework of teaching and learning' can be downloaded from the web at www.plymouth.ac.uk/disability.

It is particularly important to ensure that disabled students are aware of the support services they can turn to for help and advice in relation to counselling, finance, guidance and welfare. The HEFCE-funded Demos project provides on-line materials to help staff increase their awareness of the issues facing disabled students, http://jarmin.com/demos.

TechDis

The JISC TechDis service aims to improve provision for disabled students in higher and further education through technology. Achieving this takes several forms. TechDis provides an advice and information resource via extensive web-based databases (www.techdis.ac.uk) and an e-mail helpdesk (helpdesk@techdis.ac.uk). These resources should be the first port of call for anyone in education who has a question relating to disability and technology.

The TechDis staff also pursue outreach into the community by delivering presentations and facilitating workshops at cross-institutional events. Staff development workshops are held monthly on a range of issues relating to disability and technology in education, such as web-site evaluation tools and accessible rich media. TechDis is also developing stand-alone staff development resources to enable particular issues to be discussed in more detail within institutions and departments.

6.9 Moving on

Progression and transition

Students who are progressing to an HEI on a 2+1, 2+2 or foundation degree basis, need support and guidance as they prepare for the change. By the end of their HNC or HND programme, they will be looking forward to the challenge of further study. However, unless they know something about what to expect, some may find the transition difficult.

The lack of a national credit framework further complicates the process of transition and it is to be hoped that such a framework will eventually be introduced.

The close contact with staff teaching on HE programmes in an FEC is a great support to students. But it can also be a disadvantage if they have not also learned to be independent learners. Prepare students early for the transition to larger teaching groups, which may well comprise younger students. In addition, there may well be less access to teaching staff at the HEI.

University of Plymouth

The Student Progression and Transfer (SPAT) project, developed by the University of Plymouth with HEFCE funding, has produced a wide range of useful materials for staff and for students progressing onto HEIs to complete degree programmes. These can be downloaded from the web, www.spat.ac.uk, and customised.

There are many good examples of positive transition arrangements under progression agreements, some of which operate from HE to FE. It is an indication of the uncertain climate in which HEIs and FECs operate that some of these change with little warning as student numbers grow or decline.

6.10 Student financial support

The DfES has published a useful series of booklets aimed at students to inform them about all aspects of student support. These are also useful for staff and are distributed to colleges. The guide 'Financial support for higher education students in 2002/2003' is particularly helpful. Further information is available on the web-site, www.dfes.gov.uk/studentsupport, or by contacting the helpline on 0800 731 9133.

Tuition fees

The system of maintenance grants for students was abolished in 1998, and replaced by means-tested tuition fees and student loans.

Directly-funded colleges are responsible for collecting their own tuition fees (fixed by the Government, see below). In the case of indirectly funded provision, the partnership agreement determines how the fees are collected. Colleges generally make it possible for students to pay in instalments. Fees for those students assessed as paying no fee, or a part fee, are paid directly to the university or college by the Student Loans Company.

Students may be eligible to have their fees paid in full, or in part, based on a means test applied to either student income, parental income, or spouse's income, whichever is appropriate. The scheme is administered by local education authorities in England and Wales, the Student Awards Agency for Scotland (SAAS), and the Northern Ireland Education and Library Boards (NIELB).

Students can apply from January in the year of entry, using the HE1 document available from the above bodies or from the DfES web-site. To receive financial support on time, the DfES recommends the following:
15 March: advised deadline for submission of HE1
21 June: advised deadline for HE2 (financial assessment form).

HEFCE assumes colleges will charge the full tuition fee, based on the premise that quality can only be assured if the available resources are comparable with those received by an HEI. For that reason, in 1999 it applied a policy of migration, gradually adjusting the grant paid to FECs to bring their funding in line with HEIs.

The full-time fee is set by the Government, and there has been a small increase year on year. Part-time and postgraduate rates are recommended but colleges are free to set their own fee levels. The full-time fees for UK and EU students for 2003-04 are:

- full-time undergraduate (includes HND) £1,125
- part-time undergraduate (includes CertEd) and sandwich year-out £550
- postgraduate (recommended level) £2,940.

Part-time higher education

For funding purposes, HEFCE defines a full-time student as someone who is studying for at least 21 hours a week over at least 24 weeks a year. This refers to total studying time rather than contact time.

Part-time students may be able to get assistance in paying their tuition fees but must demonstrate that they meet DfES criteria for receiving this assistance. Students apply to their institution for any financial assistance.

HNC students frequently find it difficult to fund their part-time study unless they are sponsored by employers. Before funding of HNCs was transferred to HEFCE, many colleges had an arrangement to remit the fees or offer support through what was then the Further Education Funding Council. This is more difficult now, and support staff are not usually funded to support HE students. Some colleges use their HEFCE widening participation premium or Development Fund to improve the learning support they offer students.

HNC students are particularly vulnerable to financial difficulties because they may be on benefit or working a considerable number of hours in order to study at all.

Student loans

Since the abolition of maintenance grants for students in 1998, most full-time students are eligible for a student loan. Most (75 per cent) of the loan is a basic entitlement and 25 per cent is income-assessed in the same way as the tuition fee. Currently, the loan, up to a maximum of £3,905 a year (outside London), must be repaid gradually once the graduate is earning £10,000 a year. Students with extra weeks of study over the standard 30 weeks can have an average £69 per week added to their loan.

The Student Loans Company distributes loans, but the LEA administers applications for loans. Students should apply from June in the year of entry (and up until 31 December in the year of study), using the back of the Financial Notice sent to them by their LEA, SAAS or NIELB after completion of the HE2 form.

Since 2000, part-time students have been eligible for a loan of £500 a year. To qualify, the course must exceed one academic year's duration, and not exceed twice the period normally required to complete a full-time course leading to the same qualification. This means that if a fast-track HNC course is designated part-time, its students are not eligible for the loan.

Loans are frequently insufficient to meet the full living costs for students living away from home, and not all students receive funding from parents or other sources. The introduction of loans has led to a significant increase in students working part-time to support themselves. This may have an impact on academic performance.

Courses that do not start in September can create difficulties for students wishing to apply for a student loan, since the annual timescale is geared to the traditional academic year.

Colleges need good quality information and advice about financial matters so that students are clear about their commitments.

Access/Hardship Fund

The Hardship Fund (part of the Access Fund at colleges) is a limited fund available to eligible applicants at their institution. Any grants are not repayable.

Hardship loan

Applicants must have applied for their full student loan entitlement before requesting a hardship loan. They must also be able to demonstrate their hardship. The loan is awarded by the Student Loans Company and is added to the student loan repayment.

Career development loan

A career development loan can help to cover up to two years' vocational training or education. It covers up to 80 per cent of the course fee. Loans between £300 and £8,000 have to be repaid from up to one month after completion of the course. Application forms can be obtained by ringing the DfES career development loan helpline, 0800 585 505.

Opportunity Bursaries

All HEIs with full-time undergraduates and some FECs are allocated funds by the DfES for Opportunity Bursaries. Applicants from qualifying areas must apply to the institution where they wish to study after receiving the offer of a place.

Access Bursaries

For full-time students who are also parents, the Access Bursary supports the cost of looking after children while studying. It is paid according to need and is not repayable.

Extra funding for student parents:

- dependants grant
- childcare grant
- travel, books and equipment grant
- school meals grant
- lone parents grant (not available for students who started their course after 2000-01).

Other funding:

- care leavers grant
- Disabled Students Allowance (DSA).

EU and international students

EU students are charged the same fees as home students, and are entitled to be means-tested for a reduced fee through the EU department of the DfES, but they are not entitled to student loans or Access/Hardship Funds.

International students are not entitled to student loans or Access/Hardship Funds.

Refugees and asylum-seekers

Entitlement is different according to status. Colleges are advised to check with the DfES about the funding for particular students; contact the DfES Student Support Helpline, tel 0800 731 9133.

Applicants awarded refugee status must produce their Home Office letter at registration and will be charged home fees. They are also eligible for student loans and Access/Hardship Funds.

Applicants with indefinite leave to remain are entitled to home fees, student support (such as fee assessment and loans) and Access Funds after three years' residency.

Applicants with exceptional leave to remain but refused refugee status are eligible for home fees, but not financial support or Access/Hardship Funds until they have achieved three years' residency.

Applicants with exceptional leave to remain but who have not applied for refugee status (because, for example, they fled from domestic violence) are eligible for home fees but are not eligible for financial support or Access/Hardship Funds, even after three years' residency, unless they have been awarded 'indefinite leave to remain'.

6.11 Changes to student financial support

The Government's White Paper, 'The future of higher education', published in January 2003, identifies a number of changes in student financial support, to be introduced gradually starting in autumn 2004. These include:

- a grant of up to £1,000 for those from lower income groups
- an end to up-front tuition fees
- a range of tuition fees from £0 to £3,000, to be paid after a student has graduated and is earning a minimum of £15,000
- a package of support for part-time students.

For further details, see Chapter 7 of the White Paper, on the web at www.dfes.gov.uk under Publications.

There will also be additional support for foundation degree students, in the form of bursaries which might be used either for extra maintenance or to offset the fee for the course.

6.12 Information to students

Students are entitled to the fullest information possible about any programme they are considering. They will usually gain this information from a number of sources: the prospectus, UCAS profiles, course leaflets or a course handbook.

Prospectus

The prospectus is clearly a promotional publication but information must still be accurate. Language that could mislead a prospective student should be avoided. A prospectus is often published well before the start of a programme, so some information may change. It is as well to include a disclaimer, such as the following:

> 'This prospectus is prepared well in advance of the academic year to which it relates. Consequently, details of programmes offered may vary with staff changes, and fees payable may

be affected by inflation or national changes. The college therefore reserves the right to make such alterations to programmes and fees as are found to be necessary. If the college makes an offer of a place, it is essential that you are aware of the current terms on which the offer is based. If you are in any doubt, please feel free to ask for confirmation of the precise position for the year in question, before you accept the offer.'

UCAS profiles

Many colleges have joined the UCAS scheme of electronic profiles. The profiles are written by the institution, which can present the course as it chooses. This is an opportunity to include far more detail than in the UCAS handbook or a college prospectus. If the college does not currently have UCAS profiles and would like to develop them, contact the Outreach Department on 01242 544631.

Examples of profiles can be seen on the UCAS web-site, www.ucas.ac.uk. There is a facility for institutions to update their entries themselves on-line.

Course leaflets

Some colleges do not have a separate prospectus for higher education programmes but course leaflets are very common. A good course leaflet needs to give information about:

- the title of the award
- mode of study (full-time or part-time) and length of the course
- entry qualifications
- selection procedure
- outline of course content, probably through the programme specification
- special activities such as work placement and educational visits
- career prospects
- course-related costs
- who to contact for further information
- finance.

Course handbook

The course handbook is by far the most important document given to students. It is also helpful to new staff and to QAA subject reviewers. The content and the tone have an impact on students. Course handbooks provide information for reference that is available throughout the course and updated each year.

Using the course handbook

If the course handbook is distributed during induction, students need to be clear that it is a working document that should become an important part of their studies, not something to glance at and gather dust. Staff often comment that they tell students that information is in the course handbook but they do not read it. Students need to be encouraged to treat the handbook as an important reference document. Some colleges have loose-leaf binders and introduce sections at appropriate times, using the binder to store material such as learning contracts or personal development plans.

When relevant, it can be a good idea to go through a particular section at appropriate times of the year in tutorials, for example to review the assessment schedule or the information about academic honesty or plagiarism.

The style of the handbook is important: using a direct form of address and a personal style is often more effective than writing in the third person about 'the student'. One college identified a detailed and friendly course handbook and made it available electronically so that the other course leaders could have access to it and customise it.

The content

The amount of information included in a course handbook will depend on whether the college also produces module handbooks. Below are the contents pages of handbooks for two HND programmes. A combination of the information listed for the two courses would provide a comprehensive course handbook.

Course handbook for HND Design Crafts

Contents

- Course calendar
- General information about the college
  - General information
  - Student services - General
  - Student support and guidance
  - Complaints procedure
  - Health and safety information
  - Student contract
- The course
  - Tutorials
  - Course information and structure
  - Course aims and objectives
  - Course content
  - Course delivery
  - Assessment
  - Assessment appeals procedure
  - Academic honesty/plagiarism
  - Study visits
  - Studio practice
  - Loan policy
  - Equipment required
  - Suggested reference material
  - Student feedback
- Induction checklist

Course handbook for HND Music Technology

Contents

This book is intended to be a guide to your studies on this course. We have also tried to answer some of the most common questions you are likely to ask about the course over the next two years – well, the next month or two anyway. Try to keep hold of this booklet during your entire stay at the college – it's a good reference document.

About the college
Your course
- Course structure
- Learning
- Assessment, grading, progression
- Submission of assignments
- Common skills
- Extension request form

Support services
Your personal tutor
Facilities at the sites where you will be based
The cutting rooms
Module information
Reading lists
Periodicals

Useful telephone numbers
- Course leader and tutor
- Their e-mails

7 Working in partnership

7.1 Models of collaboration
7.2 Common features of successful partnerships
7.3 Reaching agreement about collaboration
7.4 Local provision of higher education
7.5 Working with employers
7.6 Working with networks

7.1 Models of collaboration

There are many models of collaboration and partnership, some involving formal partnership agreements and others based on more informal linkages. When HEFCE proposed the establishment of funding consortia in 1999, it published a code of practice for indirectly funded partnerships (HEFCE 00/54), the implementation of which is being reviewed in 2003. Section 2 of the QAA code of practice covers collaborative provision more widely. Although most of the precepts relate to the actions taken by the lead HEI, it is important for an FEC working in partnership to be aware of what is considered to be good practice.

The Government's White Paper on the future of higher education (January 2003) places particular emphasis on partnership, through increased collaboration and indirect funding relationships, and through the joint HEFCE/LSC Partnerships for Progression initiative. This will become part of the Aimhigher programme, along with Excellence Challenge.

Formal relationships requiring a partnership agreement, a memorandum of co-operation or some other form of definitive document include:

- the HEFCE-funded consortia
- franchised provision
- foundation degrees
- validation arrangements
- accreditation arrangements
- mergers.

The term consortium is used to describe more or less formal groups of institutions with a common purpose. Colleges should be clear about the way the term is being used. HEFCE uses the term in at least three ways:

- to describe funding consortia
- to describe groups of institutions developing foundation degrees
- to describe colleges with fewer than 100 FTEs of HE provision which join with one or more other institutions to bid for an allocation from the Development Fund for Learning and Teaching.

Other partnerships include:

- collaborative groupings for planning or sharing good practice
- working with employers

- themed groupings, for example a Creative Industries Forum
- strategic alliances, especially around shared interests.

Matthew Boulton College and Aston University

A strategic partnership between the college and the university includes:

- college re-location to Aston's site
- a strategic alliance
- franchising
- validation and accreditation
- curriculum mapping
- curriculum development
- staff development.

There are 11 HEFCE-funded consortia, all but two led by HEIs. The Humber FE/HE Consortium is led by Hull College, and North East Sussex College of Technology (NESCOT) leads another. Jointly, they belong to an over-arching organisation, the Consortium for Consortia (COCO). All funding consortia have different ways of operating and different numbers of partners, but the guiding principle is that the student numbers are allocated by HEFCE to the lead institution and then divided between the partner organisations. There is some useful flexibility in being able to distribute student places most advantageously for the consortium as a whole.

Reflecting the experiences of a number of funding consortia, Table 11 suggests some advantages and disadvantages of working in this kind of partnership. Many of the points will also apply to other forms of indirectly funded partnerships.

Table 11 Funding consortia: advantages and disadvantages

Advantages	Disadvantages
Formal agreement – clear definitions of all aspects of the collaboration reviewed regularly.	Apparent loss/lack of funding can cause confusion. Consortia were not funded in the same way as other colleges in the second round of HEFCE development funding. It was assumed that HEIs were passing on other special funding (eg from the Teaching Quality Enhancement Fund) or the premium for widening participation. This clearly does not happen in all cases.
Transparent funding methodology – the proportion of funding allocated to the partner colleges must be agreed and it is made clear how any holdback is being spent.	Lack of clarity about other funding streams – some funding to which college members of consortia are entitled is 'hidden' within other HEFCE documents such as HEFCE 01/16 (human resources) and HEFCE 01/48 (capital projects).
Flexibility over student numbers – consortium numbers are ring fenced and can be moved between colleges with	Recognition of consortia – the development of consortia provision is not recognised as a replacement for directly funded/franchise provision by

agreement of the management board.	HEFCE. Policies and circulars are not clear about how consortia are affected or should respond and consortia can feel disadvantaged.
Growth – student numbers (full-time and part-time) have increased each year since most consortia were established.	Data requirements – difficulties recording data between HEI and partner FECs in consortia. FECs often regard the HE students as their own, which leads to confusion in data returns to HEFCE, HESA and LSC, with potentially unhelpful consequences for funding.
External funding – consortia have been successful in gaining funding from JISC, IAG partnerships, local LSC Skills Development Fund and a number of consultancies.	Administration – FECs usually have less access to administrative support and consequently may not appear to place the same emphasis on 'the details'. This may result in the university's systems seeming somewhat slow to FE colleagues.
University infrastructure – existing expertise in finance and student records can be utilised on behalf of college members.	Student support arrangements – the decision to make allocations for student hardship funds/loans direct to FEC consortium members was unhelpful. Consortia should have been asked to indicate which model would suit them better.
Working groups – a network of working groups, usually chaired by college members, has been established in some consortia to facilitate joint developments in areas such as marketing, admissions, curriculum, VLEs and libraries.	Loss of profile – some colleges feel they have lost their profile with HEFCE since joining a consortium.
Good practice – nationally, the development of several funding consortia has encouraged the sharing of ideas and experiences, while locally colleges formerly in competition have been brought together.	VLEs – the introduction of a VLE across consortia can be problematic, particularly regarding technical and training issues.
Staff development – HEIs usually offer some opportunities and often waive or reduce fees for formal study on postgraduate programmes.	Pay differential and conditions – membership of a consortium reveals more transparently the differential in pay and conditions of work between staff in HE and FE. FE staff do not enjoy the same flexibility in timetabling and working from home arrangements enjoyed by HE lecturers, and FE lecturers have heavier teaching loads. This makes it more difficult to undertake scholarly activity and professional updating.
Branding – the consortium usually becomes quickly recognised locally and nationally.	
Access to learning resources – students frequently have access to libraries and on-line resources which provide greater range,	

depth and currency than could be provided by individual colleges.	
Guidance and support – students can also have access to the support facilities of the university which may enhance their experience.	

7.2 Common features of successful partnerships

Pre-requisites:

- clarity of purpose: a clear and shared understanding of why the partnership should exist and what it seeks to achieve
- a genuine willingness to be involved
- a corresponding commitment to collaborative working
- real benefits for all partners
- an informed awareness of the costs of working in partnership, especially in terms of time
- some central co-ordination for multiple partnerships.

Ethos:

- collaborative arrangements should recognise the equality of all partners
- openness and transparency are essential
- resources and responsibilities should be shared
- there needs to be a willingness to compromise
- partners need to be alert to potential areas of conflict of interest and competition.

Structure:

- there must be fitness for purpose, and agreement about objectives
- a degree of formality will be required in HEFCE-funded consortia and may be appropriate in other partnerships
- agreements should characterise best collaborative practice
- there are advantages to building on existing or prior networks
- proper administrative support is essential
- the most effective partnerships involve, in some capacity, all categories of staff
- senior management is important in sending out a message of institutional support but should not drive the partnership if the staff who have to implement it are not committed
- the creation of sub-groups and working parties, bringing together FE and HE staff around topics of mutual interest, can be effective in starting a dialogue.

Process:

- it can be helpful for partnerships to focus on a limited number of key issues (for example, the development of foundation degrees or the creation of a consistent HE quality assurance system across the partnership)
- however, an initial concentration on practical issues should not result in the loss of a more strategic perspective

- flexibility to respond creatively to changing external circumstances is an important characteristic of successful partnerships.

(These points are summarised from the section on collaboration and partnership in HEFCE 2003/16.)

Consortium for Post-Compulsory Education and Training (PCET)

The consortium is a large, dispersed collaborative partnership that traces its origins to 1966. It now consists of 32 FECs across the north of England which deliver in-service qualifications in professional development to over 2,000 teachers and trainers working in the post-compulsory sector of education and training. The awards made are those of the University of Huddersfield.

Several characteristics of the partnership have contributed to its endurance and success (such as in quality review), particularly the professional relationships between all involved in the delivery of the programmes. These relationships have been cultivated and supported through various means, including:

- monthly, all-day meetings of leaders of the teaching team in each of the colleges. These can include a programme of outside speakers and presentations profiling each centre, training workshops, resource exchanges, research seminars, dissemination activities
- focused occasional workshops for staff in partner colleges who support the programmes (librarians, finance officers, HE/QA managers)
- liaison tutors – university staff who are designated as the link person for the programmes in each college. Their duties include attending centre-based committees, inducting/briefing students on parts of the programme, supporting the pathway manager in each location, and providing the first point of contact for queries
- collaborative curriculum development which, because of the specialist focus of the programmes on teaching in post-16 education, genuinely values the expertise and experience of practitioners in the FECs
- an annual conference (with associated events) that brings together all tutors engaged on PCET programmes for reflection on practice, sharing of experience and up-dating on current developments and research.

The consortium is currently exploring means of enhancing collaboration between dispersed institutions through ICT, but as a supplement to existing mechanisms that entail face-to-face contact between partners, not as a substitute for them.

7.3 Reaching agreement about collaboration

Any formal, collaborative arrangement must have an agreement or memorandum of co-operation. HEFCE 00/54 provides codes of practice for the two types of indirectly funded partnership entered into by HEIs and FECs: franchises and consortia. It gives guidance on the principles that should be reflected in the agreements that underpin these indirectly funded partnerships. There is also a sample memorandum of co-operation on the HEFCE web-site www.hefce.ac.uk under Good practice/Indirect funding.

The following checklist, produced by the Association of Colleges to advise its members, draws on both documents.

Checklist for an agreement with an HEI for collaborative provision

General:

- strategic viewpoint providing sound reasons why the FEC is entering the arrangement and the nature of the HE learning experience planned at the FEC
- status of memorandum. HEFCE advises that the memorandum outlines the nature of the relationship but may include specific agreements which are legally binding
- how the arrangement can be ended and how the impact on students will be managed.

Funding:

- what the HEI is providing for the proportion of funding retained, including staff development responsibility, and the costs of services provided
- what the FEC is delivering and at what cost
- the fee paid to the college by HEI for each student
- the schedule of fees
- proportion of Access Funds transferred to the college
- proportion of other funding – for example, for widening participation, improving learning and teaching, capital investment, or staff development – transferred to college
- target numbers and holdback arrangements for over- and under-recruitment
  - protecting numbers – ensuring agreement of target numbers in advance of recruitment, and criteria for vireing numbers between the university and the college
  - mechanisms for increasing or reducing target numbers
  - arrangements relating to drop-out or withdrawal of students.

Administration:

- the division of administration arrangements and details of access to the HEI's facilities
- the demands of FE staff time over and above the teaching commitment, for example to attend panels and review meetings, and HEI expectations regarding 'scholarly activity'
- responsibility for and arrangements for admissions, recruitment, publicity and marketing
- details of materials to be provided by the HEI for the FEC in relation to franchised courses
- details of the key contacts at management and course level in the HEI and FEC for liaison and management
- the management structure, nature and timing of meetings, and attendance requirement
- responsibility for conduct of examinations, appeals and academic standards
- progression arrangements for students on completion of the course.

Quality:

- quality assurance and audit arrangements
- the nature and format of data and information required of the college
- joint HEI/FEC approval of staff delivering courses in the FEC, including staff changes.

7.4 Local provision of higher education

The University of Sunderland has developed a policy for working with its FE partners. The following is an extract from the policy, and demonstrates a carefully developed process of collaboration. The full version is on the web.

Additional material on the web: Policy on local provision of HE with partner FECs, University of Sunderland

University of Sunderland

The development of a local provision strategy assumes that many HE students will want to study close to home and/or to their workplace. The university aims to play a full part in meeting this growing demand, and plans to provide for local needs through a mix of on and off campus facilities in collaboration with FE partners.

The elements of a common strategy should include:

- a range of common foundation and top-up programmes available at a variety of centres in Tyne & Wear and County Durham
- unified progression pathways building a 'colleges to University of Sunderland pyramid' as the principal progression route for graduates from the core group of partner FECs, with curriculum links from NVQ 3 to NVQ 4, and new HE programmes to extend vocational routes beyond NVQ 3
- a joint approach to widening participation, with the university and partner colleges pooling work with schools and communities to address aspiration raising and achievement levels in schools. The university would work with partner colleges to target particular low participation problem areas in conjunction with local community organisations and providers of basic skills
- a degree of specialisation based upon academic and infrastructure strengths and linked to FE Centres of Vocational Excellence. In practice this might mean that the university would choose to locate all its provision at a partner institution's premises
- collaboration in deployment of resources, including staff working across the HE-FE divide, co-ordination of student support and learning resource provision
- concerted capital developments to provide a comprehensive network of high quality local HE centres
- concerted approaches to HEFCE funding with co-operative or joint bidding for widening participation and additional student number allocations
- co-operation in staff development, including developments based on the established University of Sunderland franchised Cert FE and HE awards.

7.5 Working with employers

Close involvement with employers is one of the strengths of HE in FE, and a key attraction for students. Vocational courses form much of the provision of HE in FE, and strong and long-lasting links have been built up over a considerable period. The importance of such partnerships can be seen in the criteria for the design and development of foundation degrees, where employer involvement and work-based learning are central to the award. The development of foundation degrees has been particularly effective

in building on existing links and forging new ones. As the new Sector Skills Councils develop they too will become involved in the process of foundation degree design and development (see **Section 3.6**). The Sector Skills Development Agency has a clear remit to engage with HE and FE and to ensure employer involvement in new courses.

FECs must be fully informed about skills shortages and skills sector changes and developments, both locally and regionally. With the advent of the Regional Development Agencies, the LSC and the Sector Skills Councils, curriculum planning will be influenced by successful recruitment based on local demand. Robust labour market information and careful planning are needed to recruit without replication or duplication in a highly competitive market. Effective partnerships with employers can make a major contribution to success in these areas.

Workforce development is a key feature of the contribution by the LSC to the widening participation initiative. The recent consultation document, 'LSC Draft Workforce Development Strategy to 2005', sets out key proposals.

The Learning and Teaching Support Network (LTSN) has published a useful directory of information for HE staff who wish to enhance their students' preparedness for work. The 'Directory of employability resources' is available on the web, www.ltsn.ac.uk under Generic Centre/Resources.

Developing, maintaining and enhancing links with employers is extremely time-consuming. It takes skill, effective deployment of resources and imagination to build and maintain the connections. Table 12 describes some of the ways in which colleges link with employers.

Table 12 Links between colleges and employers

Employer link	Comment
Part-time HNC courses for employed students	Hundreds of students improve their qualifications in this way, attending a local college on day release or during the evening. Some of the assignments are directly work-related and employers have regular contact with the college, receiving regular progress reports. They may offer guest lectures or demonstrations, industry visits and secondments or placements for staff.
Employer advisory board, panel or forum	Many colleges hold regular formal meetings with employers: to inform them of trends and developments, to consult on curriculum design, to ask for subject-related advice. Strategies to overcome the problem of pressure on time have included: • fax surveys about curriculum design • breakfast meetings • a meeting tied into other college events, eg, art & design shows, special awards ceremonies.
Collaborative employer groups	Colleges in the North-East have involved employers in establishing a Technology Centre for their joint use.
One employer, or managing agent, acting on behalf of a	One person has the liaison role with the college, works with the staff and feeds back to the group of employers. This is dependent on the

group	energy and commitment of the individual but can work very well and at a higher level of useful detail than broader groupings.
Employer involvement in foundation degrees or other curriculum design	Identifying the gaps and demands Active engagement with the design of the course Setting of learning outcomes particularly in vocational skills Continuity of involvement
Employer involvement through the workplace	Providing work placements and feeding back on their effectiveness Offering group problem-solving exercises to students Acting as a mentor Offering shorter periods of work experience – a visit, or work shadowing Encouraging employees to take further training as part of workforce development Health & safety Setting of learning outcomes particularly in vocational skills
Employer involvement in the curriculum	Offering guest lectures Advising students on career choice and portfolio development Mock interviews Setting an assignment or brief Commissioning a live brief Reporting back to staff and students on the outcomes Taking part in assessment (usually after some training)
Employer involvement at college events	Careers/futures fairs where employers offer advice to students
Employer link posts	Some colleges are using the HEFCE Development Fund to create posts or fractional posts to enable them to appoint staff specifically to work with employers

QAA reports

South Trafford College, Business & Management, 2001
'...newly formed Employers Consultation Forum will enhance external involvement in the delivery of the programme.'

Spelthorne College, Business & Management, 2001
'...maintenance of links with the local business community, through such mechanisms as the local chamber of commerce and the Surrey Education Business Partnership.'

Blackpool and the Fylde College, Business and Management, 2001
'...one commendable feature is the use of live scenarios contributed by local employers, which are researched and analysed by students and then fed back to the employer.'

Northbrook College, Sussex, Art & Design, 1998
'Good practice in the menswear design programme disseminates the placement experience in a CASS [cultural and supporting studies] seminar and integrated assignment.'

Blackpool and the Fylde College, Art & Design, 1999
'...industrial links within the photography programme of the BA Design include innovative activity in which students manage an allocated budget to invite visiting practitioners to contribute to a programme of lectures, seminars and social activities.'

City College Manchester, Art & Design, 2000
'A well-established network of links with regional design organisations assists course programme design, delivery and modification to take full notice of current professional practices and developments.'

Croydon College, Art & Design, 2000
'...programmes also have productive links with a variety of practising artists and external organisations. The latter include theatre companies, media organisations including television companies, and galleries.'

City College Manchester

The HND in music and new media management has built a high profile within the UK and the international music industry by linking from the outset of the course (four years ago) with recording, management, publishing and media companies. Examples include the launch of a successful student record label, and music industry conventions, which have been supported by senior industry figures and all UK music industry associations. We have also secured regular placements with Sony Music under its work placement plan.

A half-time HE employment links development post has been created for two years, funded by the

HEFCE Development Fund. The postholder will work with all HE teams to build links with employers; arrange, track and monitor work placements and experience; and help to develop students' employability skills.

Cleveland College of Art and Design

The college has employed a consultant to audit industrial links for each course, producing a database of contacts and identifying gaps in current practice. Emphasis has been placed on developing new relationships with SMEs in the area and, in particular, the new micro businesses that have developed around the creative aspects of IT and digital technologies.

Live briefs are set by local or regional companies, maintaining currency in course content, and providing an opportunity for employers and students to meet and discuss design issues in a realistic endeavour.

Useful web-sites for further information:

- labour market information, www.statistics.gov.uk, then select Themes, Labour market
- National Training Organisations, www.nto-nc.org
- Regional Development Agencies, www.dti.gov.uk, then select Regions and Regional Development Agencies
- Sector Skills Development Agency, www.ssda.org.uk, where you can register to be kept informed by e-mail of developments
- Centre for Economic & Social Inclusion, www.uuy.org.uk, has information on latest government initiatives plus useful links.

7.6 Working with networks

Partnership through networking is one of the best forms of staff development. Most people would rather talk to colleagues than read articles or good practice guidance, or search web-sites, no matter how useful those channels are. There is nothing to beat the face-to-face, iterative business of discussion. It is after all what FE and HE staff spend most of their professional life doing.

Key features of successful networks:

- central co-ordination for sending out information, convening meetings and events, and holding membership records
- funding to support these activities. Some networks contribute a small amount from the HE in FE Development Fund, others have a membership fee, some have obtained funding from their RDA
- regular meetings/events planned well in advance
- events where people can meet face-to-face; these are more popular than teleconferencing or web-based communications
- a venue that is convenient for all members who have to travel
- a planning or steering group.

Activities must be current and relevant to the members, who should have some input into deciding what the activities are. It is helpful if members have shared interests, and if activities are arranged to

accommodate particular interests, such as a workshop for support staff or a separate meeting for HE managers.

The way networks operate

Organised events have covered a range of activities including:

- guest speakers – from the QAA, the LSC, the Learning and Skills Development Agency (LSDA), and HEFCE consortia
- workshops to share good practice relating to foundation degrees, QAA subject review, developing programme specifications, progress files, curriculum development and planning, and teaching and learning
- discussions about establishing or feeding back on research activities
- opportunities for informal conversation at events or via e-mail groups or bulletin boards
- ways of disseminating information between meetings, via briefing notes, papers, e-mail
- regional staff development for HE staff in a group of colleges and HEIs.

8 Management and planning

8.1 Introduction
8.2 Roles and responsibilities
8.3 Higher education planning cycle
8.4 Course management: roles and responsibilities
8.5 Using management information
8.6 Funding

8.1 Introduction

This section is aimed particularly at recently appointed managers of HE provision in FECs and their partners in HEIs. In response to requests from colleges, some of what follows is as much information as good practice guidance.

The arrangements colleges make for managing their higher education provision vary considerably. Some see the HE programmes as part of seamless provision for the whole college; others see it as distinctive enough to have a separate HE centre (see **Section 1.4**).

Increasingly, colleges are appointing senior staff with a remit for managing or co-ordinating the HE work. The quality and success of HE provision is enhanced if there is a manager with a clear overview of the issues affecting HE in FE at a time of much change, and who has the time and resources to co-ordinate the work effectively.

8.2 Roles and responsibilities

Further education colleges have a plethora of job titles that differ between institutions. The same title might not carry the same responsibilities. In Table 13, we set out a selection of roles and their responsibilities to demonstrate the variety of tasks that need to be carried out to ensure the effective co-ordination of HE provision in an FEC. This selection will not fit every institution, but it should be possible to map the responsibilities to posts within the college's structure.

The number of people involved will depend upon the size of the HE provision. A college with a small number of HE students may distribute the responsibilities differently and combine several of the groupings listed.

Table 13 Roles and responsibilities for HE provision in an FEC

Role	Responsibilities	Works with
Group 1 Senior manager post: Vice-principal Assistant principal Director of curriculum	The strategic lead May oversee QAA subject review Partnership links Funding, data returns to HEFCE Development of policy Could be an aspect of general curriculum or cross-college areas May liaise with HEIs over indirectly funded partnerships, especially funding agreements	Group 2: middle manager who will normally have the responsibility for co-ordination and management Group 3
Group 2 Middle manager post: HE manager HE co-ordinator HE director Head of cluster of programmes	Overall co-ordination of HE and strategy Ensures quality assurance systems are in place, implemented and monitored May oversee QAA subject review Negotiates about curriculum development Development of policy Disseminates HEFCE/QAA and other HE information Partnership links (HEI, network) Staff development and training Chairs relevant committee/forum	Group 1 (if appropriate) Group 3 Group 4 Staff teaching HE across the college Management information systems (MIS) Learning centre manager/ librarian Staff development manager HE practitioners who will include Group 5 Links with HEFCE/QAA/ LSDA/LTSN
Group 3 Head of department Head of school Curriculum manager Programme area manager	Responsible for the curriculum planning and development across a cluster of programmes Liaises with HEI or other awarding bodies Deploys staff to teach HE Professional development for course teams Peer review of teaching Staff appraisal	Group 1 Group 2 Other members of Group 3 Group 4 Group 5 Student support services Marketing MIS Finance department

Group 4 Curriculum manager Team leader	May have some of above responsibilities Focuses on course delivery and teams of staff Probably responsible for the operation of several programmes Liaises with external examiners and verifiers	Group 2 Group 3 Other members of Group 4 May share responsibilities of Group 5 HEI subject links Other subject staff External subject centres and agencies Students
Group 5 Course leader	Manages a particular course	Students Student representatives Group 3 Group 4 Other members of Group 5 Admissions staff Marketing Subject staff in team, full-time and part-time

The structure of higher education institutions, though not uniform, is more consistent across the sector. Table 14 lists some of the posts in a typical HEI with the nearest equivalent in FE.

Table 14 Comparable posts in HE and FE

Role in HEI	Nearest equivalent role in FEC
Vice-chancellor	Principal or chief executive
Pro vice-chancellor	Deputy or vice-principal; member of the senior management team
Dean or head of faculty	Head of faculty, programme area manager, senior curriculum manager, or a range of other titles
Head of department	Head of school or department, curriculum area manager or head of department
Programme leader	Team leader responsible for more than one course
Course leader	Course leader

8.3 Higher education planning cycle

Table 15 sets out the planning that takes place in one college. This is distributed to relevant staff. It could be used as an aide-memoire or customised. Not all the activities will apply to all colleges. The column on the right indicates how responsibility for different activities relates to different levels in the college.

Table 15 Example of planning cycle for HE in an FEC

Date	Activities – internal	Whose responsibility?	Activities – external	Whose responsibility?
August – from third week	Clearing if in UCAS	Admissions HE course leaders	Start preparing bid for additional student numbers	HE manager
August	Advertise spare places	Marketing		
September	Enrolment Induction Diagnostic analysis	Course leaders Student support Learning support		HE manager
October	Course reviews submitted	Course leaders	Bid to HEFCE for additional student numbers	HE manager
	Collect destinations information	Course leaders Administrators		
	Open day to recruit for next year	Marketing Course leaders Student support	HEFCE national conferences for FECs in London and Manchester	HE manager (or Principal)
November	Update UCAS information	Admissions or Marketing		
	Curriculum development for next academic year	Course teams	Labour market intelligence	HE manager Marketing
			HEIFES data return to HEFCE Data on indirectly funded provision submitted by the lead HEI	HE manager with MIS
January	Review student numbers/ curriculum	HE manager Curriculum manager Course leader		
February	Mid-year evaluation	Course leader Head of cluster		
March	Set targets	HE manager Curriculum manager	Allocation of student numbers and financial contract from HEFCE	Senior manager

May	Preparation of information for new students Information about accommodation	Course leader Admissions		
June	Examination boards	Course leader Curriculum manager	Monitoring report for Development Fund for Learning and Teaching	HE manager
	End of year student feedback	Course leader with quality manager		
	Exit interviews	Course leader		
	Graduation	Marketing		
July	Complete course review	Course leader		
	Prepare information for Clearing	Course leader		
	Establish assessment instruments for coming academic year	Course leader		

Ongoing planning

In addition to the activities outlined in Table 15, there will be ongoing planning to:

- complete programme specifications, using subject benchmark statements for undergraduate degree work and the QAA framework for higher education qualifications
- implement at least the mandatory four sections of the QAA code of practice for assuring academic standards and quality: section 2 Collaborative provision; section 4 Assessment of students; section 6 Programme approval, monitoring and review; and section 7 External examining
- interview students
- prepare students for progression to degree courses and employment with the help of guidance and careers services
- when requested, complete the QAA Scope and Preference survey to determine the subjects that will be reviewed and their timing. This is usually a year in advance
- produce HEFCE monitoring reports when requested
- maintain HEI links, consortia and partnerships
- respond to and participate in national initiatives such as HEFCE's widening participation programme; the joint LSC/HEFCE Partnerships for Progression initiative; and the Government's Excellence Challenge programme.

Colleges can keep up-to-date with HEFCE information and press releases by signing up to its electronic mailing list, admin-hefce, through the web at www.jiscmail.ac.uk.

8.4 Course management: roles and responsibilities

The responsibilities of a course leader are extensive but can be reduced with good administrative support and a clearly defined contribution from admissions, guidance and marketing staff.

The stages listed below follow the student life-cycle. The amount of activity that falls to the course leader will depend on how much other support is available.

Before the course starts:

- review the demand for and relevance of the course by:
  - reinforcing links and liaison with sixth form colleges and schools
  - checking competition or progression opportunities from other colleges
  - checking information from the LSC, HEIs, and local industry to ensure the demand for and relevance of the course
- ensure there are plans for niche marketing and publicity and good quality information, all of which are necessary in a competitive environment:
  - liaise with employers
  - contact level 3 students who may be progressing
  - ensure correct details are with UCAS
  - ensure full and accurate details are in the HE prospectus, course leaflets and student handbooks
- recruitment:
  - plan open days, interview procedures and academic year dates
  - keep in touch with students once they are offered a place
  - prepare an induction programme
- do as much advance planning as you can to relieve pressure at other busier times:
  - set dates for the year, including the assessment schedule, internal moderation and examination boards
  - prepare course timetable, course documentation, assessment instruments
  - introduce new students to the college and its facilities, the course structure and content, and assessment methodology; include educational visits and evaluation of induction
  - advise on appointment of student representatives
  - establish peer groups for study support.

During the course – key aspects of management and administration:

- manage the budget
- make arrangements for and support part-time staff
- convene course team meetings
- respond to requests from external examiners/verifiers
- collect information regularly for course review
- collect and prepare documentation for the examination board.

During the course – responsibilities concerning students:

- ensure each student has a personal tutor
- establish individual learning plans (or contracts) for each student

- prepare, deliver and monitor own teaching programme
- liaise with external agencies over work placements, exhibitions, educational visits
- monitor the assessment plan with the course team
- write student references for progression to degree courses in HEIs
- hold student exit tutorials
- capture feedback from students and inform them of the outcomes
- maintain records of former students' achievements and destinations.

After the course – look backwards and forwards:

- co-ordinate the monitoring and evaluation process
- discuss course review with team
- write an evaluative course review with action plan, agreed by the course team
- preliminary planning for next academic year (course content, staffing, resources, timetabling)
- send letters to all new students.

8.5 Using management information

Colleges use management information for HE in FE to:

- monitor and evaluate the success of HE programmes within the context of the college's mission and the provision's overall aims
- make required reports to HEFCE and to the LSC's Individual Learner Record (ILR)
- analyse trends and review the outcomes of decisions/action taken
- plan new provision or changes in existing provision
- inform annual course review
- report on performance indicators
- provide information to QAA subject reviewers
- support bids for special funding, such as for additional student numbers or widening participation.

The Government's White Paper on the future of higher education suggests that the data required by HEFCE and by the LSC will be reviewed, with the aim of reducing the difficulties that 'mixed economy' colleges currently face as a consequence of operating within two funding regimes. This was a recommendation of the Better Regulation Task Force, which reported in 2002.

The management information that HE courses have to provide for the QAA is different from that required for FE courses reporting to the LSC, OFSTED and ALI. Some FE methods of reporting (such as Pro-Achieve) will not give a detailed enough picture for all purposes.

QAA reviewers will expect course teams to know and understand the data and be able to explain and clarify points arising from it. Data should show absolute numbers as well as percentages.

Table 16 sets out the kind of data that is helpful for course teams to use to interrogate their provision and identify trends or changes. These are also the data that external agencies expect to be provided for HE courses. There is no one way of providing the data, but it is important to be clear about where the

responsibility lies and to avoid confusion or double counting. Following the student life-cycle (that is, from application to post-completion) will give the best range for collection.

Table 16 Data requirements for HE provision in FECs

Data for three years	For each programme
Applications	Overall numbers; ratio of applications to enrolments
Enrolment	Numbers on 1 November
Entry qualifications	Normally, highest qualification on entry. However, if the college wishes to demonstrate progression from FE to HE it will need to consider how best to do this
Withdrawals in year one, and year two	Collect reasons at the time (be clear about the census dates for withdrawals to count)
Transfers	Information about where and why
Deferrals	Collect reasons (and track student re-entry, progression and completion)
Progression from year one to year two	Include students who have been referred after their work is complete
Completion	Indicate if referred work is to be completed. Completion usually refers to the % of the original cohort that completed, not % of those entering the final year
Achievement of the award on completion	As a percentage of the students who enrolled at the start of the course. (Pro-Achieve will not always give these data.) Achievement usually applies to data about class of award, such as proportions of pass/merit/distinction profiles, or degree classifications
Added value to entry	Distance travelled between original qualifications and achievement of award
Progression to further study or employment	State whether 2+1; 2+2 or other HE progression. Provide details on whether subject-related employment or not
Student profile	
Age	18-21; 21-30; over 30
Disability	
Ethnicity	
Gender	
Measure of widening participation	For 2003-04 HEFCE will continue to allocate the premium for widening participation by reference to postcode. From 2004-05 it is considering altering the method to take into account previous educational attainment, age and demographics

Making use of the data

Quantitative data can be used effectively in a number of ways to analyse trends as well as to report on the current position. Its use is especially important in annual course review and the production of QAA self-evaluation documents (SEDs).

Annual course reviews

Discussing quantitative data enables course teams to reflect on all the areas mentioned above as well as determining actions to address any necessary improvements. Since the data provided by many college management information systems are presented to meet the requirements of FE systems, course review data become more important.

QAA self-evaluation documents

The SED reflects the key issues relating to quantitative data as well as providing the detail in the evidence base. The computing course team in the SED extract from Doncaster College has used management information to comment on key aspects of its provision. The quantitative data are included separately.

Additional material on the web: Template for presenting quantitative student data.

Doncaster College

The college has in place substantial measures to maintain and enhance the quality and standards of provision. Further, it has a policy to set continuous improvement targets year on year for key indicators such as recruitment, retention and achievement. Other analysis is encouraged to enrich the overall picture as follows:

- qualifications on entry
- age
- gender
- disability and ethnicity
- retention
- achievement, and completion rates.
- destinations, including first employment.

Qualifications on entry

The qualifications on entry report for the HNC programmes reflects the college's policy of monitoring and promoting widening participation, and the increasing percentage of mature students entering the programme with few or no formal qualifications but with a rich experiential background.

The majority of students entering the HND programme have prior experience from previous educational qualifications such as:

- HNC
- overseas qualifications
- A-levels at other institutions
- advanced FE qualifications at Sawted College.

All students entering the degree programme must meet the minimum entry qualifications stipulated by the university and applications are actively vetted and approved. The variability of qualification standards from other academic institutions has been highlighted by external examiners, and course leaders have addressed this by rigorous interview.

Age

Most students entering the HNC programme are mature students. This reflects the widening of participation and flexibility of delivery of the programme, with students in full-time employment being able to join the course. The fast-track programme also gives the unemployed and women returning to work the ability to gain the qualification quickly, and further contribute to their employability.

Most students on the HND full-time programme are under 23 and are following a qualification pathway, reflecting the college's mission in supporting progression.

Disability and ethnicity

The target groups for the HNC programmes are either unemployed seeking work, and women returning to employment or already in full-time careers. Statistically these groups reflect the ethnic mix of the local area and the proportion of people with disabilities.

The ethnic figures for the HND and degree programmes are higher, and reflect the influx of overseas students from China, the Caribbean, and students from outside the area enrolling on the course.

8.6 Funding

HEFCE operates arrangements for funding HE programmes which differ significantly from those of the LSC. HEFCE publishes a useful guide, 'Funding higher education in England' (HEFCE 02/18). The Government has a manifesto target to expand the numbers of 18-30 year-olds having experience of higher education to 50 per cent by 2010. Although institutions can vary their recruitment annually provided that they remain within certain limits, to expand significantly they need to bid for additional funded student places against criteria that HEFCE determines each year. As with many aspects of further and higher education, there is rapid change in funding.

The arrangements described below are those current in 2002-03 but are likely to be subject to change in light of a review of funding strategy by HEFCE. (See also Chapter 7 of the Government's White Paper on the future of higher education.)

Allocation of student numbers for directly funded programmes

From 1994-95 to 2001-02, HEFCE set each institution a maximum student number (MaSN). This placed an upper limit on the number of students that institutions should recruit. The students to which this limit applied were those subject to regulated fees, which generally were full-time undergraduates. In 2002 the

MaSN was abolished, allowing institutions more leeway about the full-time and part-time composition of their student population within their total HEFCE contract.

Funding is based on resources per student (including assumed income from tuition fees). In 2002-03 the base-line resource per student before subject-related and other weights are added is £2,870.

Subject weight factors are applied to certain price groups:

Price group	Subject weight
A Medicine, dentistry, veterinary science	4.5
B* Laboratory-based science, engineering and technology	1.5 or 2.0
C Other high cost subjects with a studio, laboratory or fieldwork element	1.5
D All other subjects	1.0
Psychology*	1.0 or 2.0
Media studies*	1.0, 1.5 or 2.0

* The proportions of students in price groups B, Psychology and Media to which the different subject weights apply vary by institution according to the outcomes of subject reviews.

Data reporting

The HEIFES return (Higher Education in Further Education Student Survey) is submitted by FECs to HEFCE in November each year. All students enrolled on directly funded programmes are reported and the survey is used to determine whether the contract or allocation has been met.

FECs also report on HE student numbers to the LSC.

HEIs complete the HESES return (Higher Education Students Early Statistics Survey) and also submit individual student records to HESA.

Reporting arrangements for indirectly funded provision, whether consortia or franchises, are carried out through the lead institution. For franchise arrangements, the lead institution reports on all provision to HESA, including that for the franchisee. In the case of consortia, the lead institution only reports on its own individual student data to HESA (or to the ILR if the lead is an FEC), and all the member colleges' individual student data are reported to the ILR. This can cause some confusion.

If there is a gap between the allocation of funded places and the students enrolled, there may be a holdback (also known as clawback) of funding. This usually only happens in the case of substantial shortfalls and would be equivalent to the grant allocation for each missed target. Any holdback is announced in a letter from HEFCE, usually in December.

In the case of an indirectly funded partnership, the holdback will be applied to the lead HEI or college and probably passed on to partners who under-recruit. The partnership agreement or memorandum of co-operation must clarify and agree these terms so all are aware of the arrangements from the outset.

Widening participation premium

For the last few years, all providers of HE have been paid an additional grant to support students with disabilities and those from under-represented groups. Calculations of grant for widening participation have been made according to postcodes up till now, but the system is being reviewed. It may in future be a broader definition, including school achievement. This could have implications for collecting the necessary data.

In indirectly funded partnerships, the premium is allocated to the lead HEI. Colleges need to make sure that they receive their share of the funding and of any special initiative funding received by HEIs, such as the Teaching Quality Enhancement Fund or the Fund for the Development of Learning and Teaching.

Expanding provision

There are two ways to fund additional student places: through bids for additional student numbers; and through indirectly-funded partnerships.

Additional student numbers (ASNs)

In October each year, institutions are invited to bid against clear criteria for ASNs for the following academic year. The extra student numbers can be phased over more than one year. Colleges are given two years in which to recruit. Decisions about ASN outcomes are announced the following February.

This means that the planning of new courses which involve ASNs must be started well before October, but final marketing can only start after the February announcement.

Indirectly funded partnerships

A college can also negotiate additional numbers in partnership with an HEI which has sufficient available places to allocate some to the FEC. There must be agreement to ensure the places continue to be allocated for the length of the course.

Similarly, a funding consortium with an aggregated total number of student places can redistribute some places to a partner college wishing to expand. This could depend on another college having a recruitment shortfall.

In the case of the HEFCE-recognised funding consortia, student numbers are accumulated from previous indirectly funded arrangements with colleges and/or directly funded numbers allocated to colleges before they join the consortium. The aggregated numbers form a consortium 'pot' which can be distributed across the consortium according to recruitment patterns. Similarly, a funding consortium with an aggregated total number of student places can redistribute some places to a partner college wishing to expand. This could depend on another college having a recruitment shortfall. Consortia are able to bid for ASNs in the manner outlined above.

Whether the partnership is a franchise or a consortium, the partnership agreements should be mapped against the HEFCE code of practice for indirectly funded partnerships (HEFCE 00/54). HEFCE is reviewing how effectively the code is working during 2003.

Funding calendar

HEFCE income is paid into the college each month. This includes the grant allocation, widening participation premiums and the Development Fund for Learning and Teaching. Table 17 sets out the key stages.

Table 17 Funding calendar

Month	Year	Action
October	Next year	Submit bid for additional student numbers (ASN)
November	Current year	Submit HEIFES data return
	Previous year	Letter informing the college of any holdback because contract has not been met
February	Next year	Announcement about successful bids for additional student numbers so marketing can be confirmed
March	Next year	Letter from HEFCE giving provisional funding allocation
	Next year	Students must submit HE1 by 15 March to be sure of getting financial support (see **Section 6.10**)
April	Next year	Planning should be under way for the development of new courses for ASN bids
June	Next year	Students should submit HE2, the financial assessment form, to their LEA by 21 June (see **Section 6.10**)
	Next year	Students should apply for student loans (and up till 31 December of the year of study)
		Monitoring returns due for the HEFCE Development Fund for Learning and Teaching

For details of funding issues affecting students, see **Section 6.10**.

9 Staffing and staff development

9.1 Agreeing a staff development policy
9.2 Strategies for staff development
9.3 External support
9.4 Scholarly activity
9.5 Developing a research culture
9.6 Staffing issues
9.7 Acquiring and dealing with information

9.1 Agreeing a staff development policy

Agreeing a staff development policy for all staff involved in the provision of higher education is an effective way of creating ownership of the strategic objectives for HE. In addition to subject teams and their managers, staff from the registry, admissions, guidance, MIS, finance, learning centres and learning support as well as the whole range of student services, should understand the distinctiveness of the HE provision, the regulatory and mandatory aspects, and be able to contribute towards the strategy that informs HE in FE.

Staff development is crucial to all of this. HEIs (but not FECs) are required by HEFCE to produce learning and teaching strategies. Asking a local HEI for a copy of its strategy can be a useful starting point for discussion about where HE in FE is similar to or different from that provided in HEIs. Of particular relevance to colleges with indirectly funded provision are the questions: how are the benefits from HEI strategies impacting on FE? And how can partner colleges influence the strategy for their lead HEIs?

As staff needs are determined, they can become part of the appraisal/annual review process and form individual objectives.

9.2 Strategies for staff development

It is a tribute to their commitment and enthusiasm that colleges are extremely inventive in offering a wide range of opportunities for staff involved in HE in FE, in spite of the considerable difficulties in releasing teaching staff from their heavy workloads and ensuring cover for their classes. All staff involved in HE work should undertake staff development: librarians and learning support staff, admissions and guidance staff, and student support services.

The HEFCE Development Fund for Learning and Teaching has made a significant difference to the amount of staff development available, not least by funding the time required. It is used to support activity for subject and support staff that includes studying for higher degrees, industrial secondments, developing links with HEIs, personal development and specific training, especially in ICT.

Strategies for staff development used by colleges include:

- enhancing qualifications

- subject updating
- enhancing learning and teaching
- HE staff meetings
- support for part-time staff
- encouraging staff to be involved in HE issues.

Enhancing qualifications

Full and part-time teaching staff may be offered support in terms of a contribution to fees or some time allowance to take teaching qualifications, masters degrees, doctorates or professional qualifications.

Subject updating

Since sabbaticals are rare in FE, some colleges make available personal development time for reading, and support industrial secondments and work shadowing in industry or HEIs. Working with HEI colleagues in the subject area is a fruitful way of ensuring currency and sharing learning and teaching strategies. Good links at course level make this easier.

Bradford College

The college is organising three-day placements for professional updating for 75 HE staff. This will be with local businesses, the public sector and voluntary groups (funded by the HEFCE Development Fund).

South Kent College

Using the HE in FE Development Fund money, South Kent College has set up an action research group, to enable staff teaching on HE programmes to carry out research relating to their teaching, and publish it. The grant pays for the member of staff's time, so that the contracted number of teaching hours is reduced accordingly.

Enhancing learning and teaching

This entails sharing good practice in a proactive way, going beyond compliance, and identifying and using in-house expertise.

For HE subject staff activities might include such areas as peer review of teaching, team teaching, business seminars, employers setting live briefs, and attendance at conferences and events to share good practice.

Blackburn College

Blackburn College wishes to encourage FE staff to work in the HE sector. Some staff want to develop an HND but have no experience of teaching at HND level. Obviously, they will have no experience of the organisational side of the HND. We are supporting a member of staff by giving her time to shadow a successful HND programme leader. She will attend staff meetings and any assessment board, and generally see how it is organised.

Cleveland College of Art & Design

The college has encouraged staff actively to engage in the HE sector. Three are external examiners in universities, all HE programme leaders are members of national subject associations, and LTSN staff development opportunities are circulated to all HE tutors, many of whom have attended conferences and workshops as a result.

North Trafford College

The college has used some of its Teachers Pay Initiative funding to create advanced teaching practitioner posts. One of these is based in HE and aims to support the college curriculum team as an exemplar of best practice within a designated section, developing and implementing strategies to improve teaching and learning and raise standards of retention and achievement. This will be facilitated through active membership of a cross-college advanced practitioner team. The post carries some remission of teaching duties and an enhanced salary.

HE staff meetings

One of the most valued ways HE staff (teaching and support staff) share good practice, discuss quality systems and agree policies and strategy is to have the opportunity to meet. Many colleges have established HE committees or HE development groups. In colleges with dispersed pro on, this activity is particularly valued.

This may be a more informal process, including away days, residential events, and themed sessions on, for example, assessment or quality assurance, and may include staff from other colleges and HEIs.

Course teams developing new provision or collaborating with HEIs need to work together at the design and planning stage. This, as with most staff development activities, demands a substantial commitment of time.

Manchester College of Arts and Technology

A major focus of activity, supported by our first allocation from the HEFCE development fund, has been an extensive cross-college programme of staff development for staff teaching on HE programmes in five curriculum departments. The main aims of this programme were to raise awareness of the differences between HE and FE through a focus on some key HE quality issues, and identifying and sharing existing good practice.

Bradford College

A real plus for us is being able to use the expertise of colleagues who teach on both FE and HE. They have brought new ideas/practices from their FE teaching experience into the HE programmes

and this has had a positive impact on colleagues who just teach on HE programmes.

Our major success has been an HE learning and teaching week held in January 2002. We had 18 workshops during the week covering a wide range of topics including classroom observation, progress files, subject benchmarking, and running an effective seminar. There will be two such weeks offered in 2002-03.

Greater Manchester Consortium for HE in FE

The consortium has established a shared register of staff volunteers from six HEIs and 11 colleges who are willing to offer guest lectures, peer review of teaching, participation in research projects and events such as periodic review.

Hull College

Hull College has a student support development group – which holds regular meetings to discuss HE administrative and student support issues, drawing in all the service functions of the college.

South Kent College

The college has an HE panel that meets approximately once a month. Its membership includes both teaching and support staff, and it provides the opportunity to disseminate information and discuss topics of interest to the members. Systems, procedures and policies relating specifically to HE can be agreed, and ways of adapting others to the needs of HE can also be found.

Support for part-time staff

It is important that part-time staff are integrated into subject teams and have targeted staff development. Some colleges pay part-time staff to attend events; some pay a training allowance. Other support activities include twinning with a full-time colleague in the same subject area, mentoring, and offering access to training and updating events.

Encouraging staff to be involved in higher education issues

Staff can become more involved in HE by training as a QAA subject specialist reviewer, keeping abreast of the events and publications from the LTSN, the ILTHE and the Staff and Educational Development Association (SEDA), reading the Times Higher Educational supplement, and contributing to conferences and events.

The QAA has written to colleges to say how keen it is to recruit more specialist subject reviewers for subject reviews from FECs because there are currently so few. This is partly to do with the difficulty of being released. The application form on the QAA web-site, www.qaa.ac.uk, has been revised to make it more relevant to FE staff. The subjects to be reviewed in 2003-06 are listed in the 'Handbook for Academic Review', Annex K.

9.3 External support

It is good practice for HEIs to invite partners to their staff development events. If this does not happen, colleges should ask about it. Some FE staff have taken the initiative in contacting departments in a partner HEI to explore the possibilities of involvement in research activities. Many HEIs, particularly those with indirectly funded partnerships or validation agreements, have identified advisers or link tutors who can be a valuable resource.

Barnet College

Middlesex University is licensed by BTEC to award Higher National Diplomas and Certificates on its behalf. BTEC approves the running of the HND graphics programme at Barnet College subject to Middlesex University's monitoring and evaluation of the programme.

A member of the Middlesex staff who plays a prominent role in the monitoring of the programme is the link tutor. The link tutor has the responsibility for liaison between the programme and the university and provides advice and support to staff as well as students.

Edexcel offers colleges a minimum entitlement to a specified number of staff development days.

The Learning and Skills Research Network (LSRN) offers support through its 'Research & development tool kit' (available on the web at www.lsda.org.uk under Research and development) and in many other ways. Both the LSRN and the Learning and Skills Research Centre (LSRC) are keen to develop closer links between applied research in FECs and HEIs.

LSDA's 'Quality leadership and management in post-16 learning' includes workshop materials to support staff development related to self-assessment and self-evaluation. These and the project report comparing the Common Inspection Framework and QAA review are available from www.lsda.org.uk.

The Learning and Teaching Support Network has a wide variety of material relating to staff development on its web-site, www.ltsn.ac.uk. The Generic Centre includes papers and documents on, for example, assessment and enhancement as well as information on events and conferences. The 24 subject centres offer materials and staff development events and conferences.

The Institute for Learning and Teaching in Higher Education (ILTHE) is the professional body for all who teach and support learning in higher education in the UK. Almost 17,000 people have now applied for membership, and it is one of the main sources of recognition for staff working on teaching and learning in HE.

The ILTHE is a membership body which exists to:

- enhance the status of teaching in HE
- improve the experience of learning in HE
- support innovation in teaching and learning in HE.

Many HEIs encourage staff to join: almost 80 per cent pay the processing fees and around 40 per cent pay the first or subsequent years' membership fee of £85. Associate membership is available for those with narrower or briefer experience of teaching/learning support and costs £49 a year. Tax relief can be claimed against the membership fee.

There are two main ways to join: either by completing one of the 128 accredited programmes offered in 106 HEIs or by the individual entry route for experienced staff. This asks applicants to complete a written application in which they outline their experience and expertise in six key areas, totalling no more than 3,500 words, and to provide supporting references from two people who know their teaching and learning-support work well.

More information about the organisation and the benefits of joining is on its web-site, www.ilt.ac.uk, where application forms can also be printed off.

Teacher of degree course in FE college, and member of ILTHE

'I applied to join the ILTHE for personal and professional reasons. As I hold no formal teaching qualification, membership will provide me with a legitimate, nationally recognised status as a teacher in higher education. Applying for membership was a useful process because it forced me to think through my seven years' teaching experience, focusing on what I felt to be the points of good practice. It was a valuable opportunity to stop and reflect and, to some extent, to refocus.'

The report of the Teaching Quality Enhancement Committee, published in January 2003, recommends the formation of a single body to enhance the quality of learning and teaching in HE. This would bring together the ILTHE, the LTSN and Higher Education Staff Development Agency (HESDA). The report is available on the HEFCE web-site under 'Learning and teaching/TQEC'.

External events

Staff teaching HE in FECs attend policy conferences, quality assurance training organised by the QAA, the Association of Colleges or others, and meetings of subject association members. It is a good idea to have a system for agreeing on who goes to which event. It may be possible to pair up with another institution so both colleges benefit from the information but save some time.

It is worth considering how to disseminate information gained from attending sessions outside the college. Different practices include:

- a verbal or written report to an HE staff meeting
- inclusion in a college (or regional network) newsletter
- a brief report that stresses the implications for the institution
- a standard meeting/conference pro forma which is quick to complete and easy to distribute or post on a bulletin board or the intranet.

9.4 Scholarly activity

HEFCE established the Development Fund for Learning and Teaching in 2000, to provide FECs with additional resources to improve the quality of their HE provision. One of the primary objectives was to identify and encourage scholarly activity. No definition was offered, but it is clear from work carried out as part of this project that scholarly activity includes a wide range of activities and does not map wholly on to what HEIs would identify as research.

In FECs offering HE, scholarly activity is taken to cover any or all of the following:

- keeping up-to-date with the subject
- curriculum development which involves research
- updating ICT skills
- taking higher qualifications: masters, doctorates and teaching qualifications
- consultancy to industry and other agencies
- industrial secondments or work shadowing
- involvement with National Training Organisations and Sector Skills Councils
- research and publications
- practitioner/applied research
- personal development – action research and reading
- attending staff development events within the college
- attending conferences and workshops externally
- sharing good practice through networks
- curriculum development, particularly foundation degrees, often with HEIs
- preparing for QAA subject review.

While there are no generally agreed definitions, there does appear to be a consensus about the distinction between scholarly activity as a broad collection of activities and more narrowly focused research. The following extract is from a paper by John Widdowson, Principal of New College Durham. The full paper is on the web.

> 'One of the problems facing FECs is that no comprehensive or authoritative definition [of scholarly activity] seems to be available. However, drawing on practice principally from Mixed Economy Group colleges, I suggest that scholarly activity contains one or more of the following:
>
> - continuous reading or other work aimed at maintaining currency in the subject to an appropriate level
> - wider reading in the subject so as to equip the teacher to deal with potentially stretching student questions or research topics and to prepare for changes in subject matter following original research
> - contribution to the development of the chosen field, for example, by designing new curriculum models or approaches
> - involvement in higher level professional activity in the chosen field, such as clinical practice, or business consultancy.'

Additional material on the web: HE in FE and scholarly activity – a discussion paper, New College Durham

9.5 Developing a research culture

Many colleges see the development of a research culture as one of their strategic objectives. The HEFCE development funding has given this work a significant boost, enabling many colleges to support staff in research activities that formerly would not have been possible. FE staff who conduct research activity do so in a very different climate from staff in HEIs.

The first phase of this project and Gareth Parry and Ann Thompson's work ('Closer by degrees', LSDA, 2000) both drew attention to how little research there has been into HE in FE. In addition to pedagogical or subject-based research, there is a real opportunity for groups of interested staff in colleges to research a number of areas relating to HE in FE. In collaborative research projects with HE colleagues, FE staff can contribute much, especially if work is practitioner based.

Blackburn College Teaching and Learning Group

We have formed a group of interested staff from the five schools that offer HE to consider best practice in teaching and learning. There will be a research element to this, which will help some staff to talk about what they are doing and take the first steps in publishing/discussing their work.

The college has also organised seminars where members of HE and FE staff report on the research they are doing or have done. We have several staff who publish regularly, but the main focus of these sessions is to encourage dissemination by the first-timers. The sessions are timetabled at the end of the afternoon; we have light refreshments (a glass of wine as positive reinforcement for the first one) and the whole thing lasts a maximum of an hour.

In conversation I discovered that three members of staff were doing research relating to student retention as part of their own masters courses. I thought this would be a good topic with which we could kick off the programme and we now have three events planned. The first will be reports from the three staff (10-15 minutes each), the second from a more seasoned campaigner, and then a guest from Lancaster University on how to start with getting published.

Cleveland College of Art & Design

The college has seconded a member of staff to the University of Teesside to research the boundaries between FE and HE key skills. This included a presentation at the university's learning and teaching annual conference attended by many college staff working in HE.

Northbrook College

Northbrook College developed its research policy as part of a process of accreditation with the Open University Validation Service. As an institution delivering HE it was required to ensure that staff

teaching on degree programmes were actively involved in research or equivalent professional practice 'to inform and invigorate the teaching process'.

The policy aims to encourage a range of staff research and development activity, including the usual categories such as subject updating, pedagogical development, ILTHE membership and external higher degrees. However it also covers more individual activities such as publication of books and articles, presentation of conference papers, involvement in conference organisation, and the exhibition of work.

This latter category of research and professional practice is supported through a specific allocation of funds, separate from the main staff development budget.

The college's main area for HE provision is in art and design, so the majority of projects funded through the research budget relate to visual arts activities. It is also likely that the nature of the subject means that lecturers are naturally inclined to continue with their own professional practice, and need relatively little encouragement to publish or exhibit.

One of the lessons has been that support in the form of payment of fees, materials, travel, etc is perceived as far more valuable than the allocation of time, despite the issues of heavy teaching timetables.

Warwickshire College Research Committee

The Research Committee meets approximately twice a term and its main aim is to develop a research culture within the college. We have carried out a research audit of staff but the lack of responses may be attributable, in part, to staff carrying out research, especially action research, which is not recognised by the individuals, or they do not see the benefit of telling the college about it. Our remit of 'research' is deliberately broad and would not necessarily map directly onto the same definitions used by the Research Assessment Exercise panels, for example.

A considerable proportion of the HEFCE development funds was earmarked for research and has funded pump-priming of small scale projects and software to enhance undergraduate research/design projects.

One requirement of securing funds is dissemination through the college seminar programme.

9.6 Staffing issues

Sharing good practice on staffing and human resource policies can be problematic given the differences in local practices. The most significant impact on staff development (and everything else) is the lack of uncommitted time that staff teaching HE in FE have outside the lecture room.

Pay and conditions:

- staff working in FECs are paid less than those in HEIs and secondary schools
- they have far more teaching contact and less administrative support
- their teaching contract is usually for 800 or more hours a year
- the impact of such workloads allows little time for scholarship and research. HEFCE includes an element for scholarly activity in the funding it makes available but the outcome is not always visible
- many of the staff teaching on HE programmes also teach on FE courses. This mix involves a great deal of additional work in terms of approach, quality procedures and different systems.

Staff qualifications:

- although there are few explicit policies, it is generally agreed that members of staff devoting a substantial amount of time to higher education programmes should be qualified to the level above that which they are teaching
- the main exception is tutors who have a considerable amount of relevant and recent industrial experience. Indeed, part-time staff are frequently recruited specifically because they are current or recent practitioners in a particular vocational area.

Teaching qualifications:

- many lecturers in FECs are trained teachers. Most colleges now require all new appointments to have or be working towards a teaching qualification. The Further Education National Training Organisation standards for further education colleges are outcome based and do not identify scholarly activity
- members of staff teaching largely or exclusively on higher education courses may consider joining the ILTHE (see **Section 9.3**)
- a range of qualifications is available via the SEDA professional development framework in areas such as educational technology and professional practice in HE. See www.seda.ac.uk.

Recruitment and retention of staff:

- colleges are finding it increasingly difficult to recruit appropriately qualified or experienced staff to teach higher education courses, especially if there are other colleges or HEIs in the locality
- this can be a particularly acute problem in scarce areas, such as computing. HEIs offer better salaries and conditions, and hourly paid staff are paid at a higher rate than in most colleges
- some colleges address this by paying differential and higher hourly rates to part-time staff in shortage areas, so as to be able to compete with HEIs
- it is easy to become over-dependent on individuals in small teams of staff. Indeed, the course may have first developed from one person's interest and commitment
- small teams are vulnerable to staff absences and staff changes so, to protect students, strategies should be in place to recognise and deal with this.

Actions the college can take:

- ensure that the college's staff development strategy includes a clear analysis and understanding of what is required for higher education
- contact employers with whom the college has good links. They may be able to offer guest lectures or release practitioners for a number of hours

- build up a pool or network of available staff – don't wait for a crisis
- contact other colleges or HEIs to see whether they have part-time or recently retired staff who would like more hours
- target advertising for new part-time staff in local newspapers or trade magazines
- consider paying a higher hourly rate in areas where it is particularly difficult to recruit
- be sensitive to the needs of new and part-time staff through induction, mentoring and staff development. Link staff to support networks such as the SEDA HE in FE network (see www.jiscmail.ac.uk under SEDA-HE-IN-FE), or to LTSN subject centres.

9.7 Acquiring and dealing with information

Development of all staff involved in providing HE in FE involves acquiring, and dealing with, relevant information. The college will need to decide:

- what it has to know
- what it needs to know
- what it would like to know
- who else should know.

How much can be done will depend on the size of the provision and the number of staff actively engaged in delivering and developing HE in FE. The ever increasing number of web-sites can be both a benefit and a burden to staff who have little time to search them carefully.

Table 18 lists sources that can help to keep staff up to date. Many of these organisations also offer support to HE in FE. Any information distributed usually goes to the principal or the staff development/human resources unit and may not always be cascaded through the institution.

Table 18 Sources of information for HE staff in FECs

Association of Colleges www.aoc.co.uk	Curriculum and quality briefings; occasional HE in FE briefings; FE postbox. (Briefings usually go to the principal; make sure key HE staff also see them.) Useful events listing, sharing good practice, requests for information
Consortium of Consortia (CoCo)	A network of the HEFCE-approved consortia which regularly meets and consults on HEFCE or QAA policy and procedures
Council of Validating Universities (CVU) www.cvu.ac.uk	Hosts an annual conference and periodic seminars and produces a range of publications. Colleges can become associate members
Exchange www.exchange.ac.uk	Newsletter with ideas, practice and support for decision makers in learning and teaching
Learning and Skills Development Agency www.lsda.org.uk	Many publications of interest
Learning and Skills Research Network	Information on the LSDA web-site under

www.lsda.org.uk	Research and development
Learning and Teaching Support Network www.ltsn.ac.uk	A Generic Centre dealing with cross-cutting issues; and 24 subject-specific centres
National Association for Staff Development www.nasd.org.uk	NASD aims to advance staff development and training in the post-16 sector. It provides a national forum for information, networking and debate on key issues
National Association of Business Studies Education www.nabse.ac.uk	Increasingly interested in HE in FE policy issues as well as subject-related concerns
HEFCE www.hefce.ac.uk	The HEFCE Update brings together all the latest published information. It is available in hard copy with the newsletter, Council Briefing, or on the web at www.hefce.ac.uk under Publications. To join the e-mail alert for publications, send a message to jiscmail@jiscmail.ac.uk. Leave subject field blank but in body of message put: join admin-hefce [first name last name] eg join admin-hefce Jane Brown
Quality Assurance Agency www.qaa.ac.uk	Publications and newsletter on developments in quality assurance
Society for Research into Higher Education www.srhe.ac.uk	Holds an annual conference, seminars and produces occasional publications. Colleges can become members
Staff and Educational Development Association www.seda.ac.uk	Produces a quarterly magazine to share good practice and to review policy and new initiatives. Numerous publications on good practice in teaching, learning and staff development. Discussion list for HE in FE: www.jiscmail.ac.uk/SEDA-HE-IN-FE

10 Quality assurance and enhancement

10.1 Quality assurance and enhancement
10.2 QAA comments on quality management and enhancement
10.3 Quality assurance differentiation for higher education
10.4 Student and staff feedback
10.5 Key features of QAA academic review
10.6 Key features of subject-level review
10.7 External reference points
10.8 Writing the self-evaluation document

The emphasis of this section is on colleges with provision directly funded by HEFCE.

10.1 Quality assurance and enhancement

The Generic Centre of the LTSN has initiated an interesting debate on the relationship between quality assurance and enhancement. The debate centres around the distinction between an accountability-led approach to quality and an improvement-led approach. Colleges can usefully explore the balance between these approaches in the development of their own systems to understand the drivers relevant to their own context.

Regardless of this, and in parallel with these debates, there needs to be a recognition that HE in FE is subject to the statutory external scrutiny by the QAA. The expectation is that each subject provider will be able to demonstrate that the academic standards and quality of its provision are appropriate, that there is accountability for public funding, and that the college is concerned to improve and enhance its provision.

A tension is frequently created by the fact that FECs with higher education provision are subject to two completely different systems of external scrutiny:

- the peer review process of the QAA which focuses on the subject at course level
- the inspection regimes of OFSTED and the ALI which rarely inspect higher education provision at all, other than the level 4 and 5 NVQ or professional courses which make up the LSC funded non-prescribed higher education.

Colleges will therefore need to ensure that quality systems are not only fit for purpose in assuring and enhancing provision, but can also respond to the external demands placed upon them to meet statutory requirements.

This means that HE course teams need a planned approach to academic review. To manage the quality assurance process effectively, they must ensure that:

- existing systems meet the external requirements
- staff teams are self-critical so as to enhance provision through planned improvement. This means concentrating on the positive ways to improve teaching, learning and other practices.

Indirectly funded provision and consortia led by an HEI are expected to follow the quality assurance systems of the HEI, although most consortium models stress the responsibility of individual institutions (in line with the HEFCE code of practice 00/54 – see **Section 7**). As a result of changes to the QAA review system, HEIs will have institutional audits with discipline audit trails, and a small amount of academic review at the subject level only if the need is identified. Directly funded FECs, on the other hand, will continue to have subject-level review at least until all subjects offered as directly funded provision have been reviewed. Indirectly funded provision, franchised from or offered in partnership with an HE, may be included in the HEI's institutional audit and will not automatically be reviewed. In 2001-02 some consortium colleges chose to be reviewed as a whole consortium, for example the Staffordshire University Regional Federation (SURF).

Standards elements of quality systems include:

- clear documentation that records the strategic basis for decisions about programme approval, course design, assessment, student achievement and the learning opportunities made available to students
- evaluative review processes that draw on a range of data, feedback and sources of evidence that promote reflection and enhancement
- evaluation of the impact of action taken and identification of improvements made.

10.2 QAA comments on quality management and enhancement

The overviews of QAA subject reviews carried out between 1998 and 2000, identify quality management and enhancement as one of the two priorities for improvement. (For the other, assessment, see **Sections 4.1 and 4.2**).

The main areas to improve are:

- application of institutional policy for quality assurance at the subject and programme level
- timely response to concerns of students, external examiners and others external to the institution
- feedback to students so that they know how or if their evaluative comments are being addressed
- more attention to full-time staff development
- consistency in providing induction and development for regular visiting part-time staff.

Resources

The primary resources to help enhance and maintain quality and standards at the subject level will be each institution's policies and procedures.

In addition there are:

- subject review reports (available on the QAA web-site – www.qaa.ac.uk)
- subject overview reports (summarising key points in subject areas, for example art & design or business and management, also available on the QAA web-site)
- professional and statutory body reports
- academic review reference material:
  - QAA framework for higher education qualifications
  - subject benchmarks
  - programme specifications

- QAA code of practice:
  - section 4, external examining
  - section 6, assessment of students
  - section 7, programme approval, monitoring and review

  and, if appropriate
  - section 2, collaborative provision
  - section 9, placement learning.

The QAA has established a liaison group with members from FECs, HEIs, HEFCE-funded consortia and key organisations such as the Association of Colleges and the Learning and Skills Development Agency. The work of this group will be important in acknowledging the needs of FECs.

Filton College

Quality management system:

- assessment boards – August, January, June
- course team review meetings – October, December, February, April, June
- annual self-evaluation document (four sides) – June
- self-evaluation review meeting (60-90 minute meeting with course leader, head of school, assistant principal and HE quality committee) – end June
- QAA self-evaluation document (once every 5-6 years).

The purpose of this review process is to ensure debate and reflection from team level through to middle and senior management in a structured and manageable way.

The minutes of assessment board and course team meetings will guide the creation of the annual self-evaluation document (SED), which in turn will guide the creation of the SED required by QAA prior to academic review.

The self-evaluation review meeting will ensure direct communication between the course team, head of school and senior management team, which means more likelihood of actions being achieved and monitored at all levels. This should remove the need for a lengthy paper-based course review. This process will also help to familiarise course leaders with the type of questions QAA reviewers may ask.

10.3 Quality assurance differentiation for higher education

Some FECs use the same systems for assuring quality for higher education provision as for further education. This avoids confusion for staff who teach on both levels of course and ensures consistency. However, there are occasions where HE provision requires something different, and some FECs have quite different quality systems for HE work.

Table 19 lists the main elements of City College Manchester's quality assurance frameworks. The college has gradually developed differentiated systems for its directly funded HE, although some are held in common with the FE systems.

The framework aims to address statutory requirements as well as good practice. It seeks to identify why these systems matter and where the college needs to concentrate self-critical efforts to enhance quality. Colleges may like to use this as a basis for devising their own checklist to match their own systems.

Additional material on the web: Another example of a framework for assuring quality in a large FEC with substantial HE provision.

See also, Connell, P and Underwood, S (2000) 'Through the Looking Glass', LSDA comparison between the common inspection framework and QAA academic review.

Table 19 Main elements of quality assurance frameworks for City College Manchester

Quality assurance for FE courses	Quality assurance for HE courses	Why do we need it?	What we need to do next
Curriculum			
Course team meetings with student representatives	Regular course team meetings with student representatives apart from discussion of assessment. Recorded, action points followed up and reported. Every 4-6 weeks	To ensure that all staff are involved in discussion and decisions about the course, monitoring progress and change; student views contribute. A role in annual monitoring	Minutes and records of discussions should be available for subject review and record the basis for any significant curriculum changes
Consult with learning centre	Consult with learning centre about library and IT resources	To ensure that resources are appropriate to the provision	Ensure links are maintained regularly
	Boards of studies *(or equivalent)*. Meetings to discuss curriculum design and change, to involve employers and pursue course review action points. Twice per year, November and May	Course team meetings deal with day-to-day issues. This forum will discuss broader issues of practice and planning and monitor action plans	Should be held twice a year – new remit to be published. In-depth curriculum discussion
QCA levels	QAA framework for higher education qualifications. When programmes are being changed or	A contribution to the standards debate. Although the framework does not apply to HND/HNC courses, the	Use the framework whenever we change existing curricula or design new programmes.

	developed	level descriptors are useful to consult about similar levels	
Work-based training	Advisory board/panel or formal links with employers. Two or three times per year	To contribute to course design, especially the development of foundation degrees and assessment	
	QAA Academic review external reference points:		To be supported by the Development Fund
	Programme specifications. Regularly reviewed	To be attached to the self-evaluation document	Completed by September 2002
	Subject benchmark statements. When programmes are being changed or developed	Useful to match statements where they apply	Not mandatory for HNDs as set at undergraduate level. Identify those that apply
	Code of practice for assuring academic quality and standards: especially Collaborative provision, External examining, Assessment of students, Programme approval, monitoring and review	Need to evidence consideration of at least four sections. The mapping process will lead to significant staff development	To be incorporated where appropriate
Staff development: Human Resource Development Unit provides college-wide opportunities	Staff development entitlement but also separate for HE staff: events; encouragement of research and scholarly activities; higher degrees; updating professional expertise	Need to encourage and share scholarly activity at subject and pedagogical level; focus on HE issues. Also need to encourage staff to be more self-evaluative about course delivery	To be supported by the Development Fund. Need more scholarship; pedagogical development; exchanges with HEIs
Teaching, learning and assessment			
Teaching and learning observations	Also need peer review by subject specialists with clear outcomes for sharing good practice and addressing staff development needs. Each staff member once a year	The college system of managerial observation does not give sufficient subject-related input. HE emphasis on systematic sharing of good practice	This needs to be consistently and rigorously implemented. Good records will avoid teaching observations during subject review
Internal	A more rigorous internal	The internal verification	To be supported by the

verification	moderation/verification system than for FE, with subject-specific verification and a review of written feedback to students. Three times a year	system was developed for NVQs – it needs to be more rigorous at the subject level	Development Fund. The internal verification system is being reviewed for HE
	Assessment regulations	Awarding body guidelines may not be sufficient. Need to standardise practice across all teams	Establish group to develop HE assessment regulations
External verification	Edexcel's external verification systems should meet the QAA code of practice on external examining. Two visits a year	We need to challenge practice that does not meet quality standards	We need to work with Edexcel to ensure consistent verification. We should consider producing our own guidelines for external verification
Progression/ grading meetings	Examination Board held at end of academic year (June/July) with a supplementary meeting in September to deal with referrals. Summaries to Academic Board in November	The title of this meeting may vary but it needs to be a rigorous process for agreeing awards and gradings	Process exists but practice varies. Need greater consistency
Quality assurance and enhancement			
Programme approval	Programme approval panels in line with the QAA code of practice and to ensure robust development and design of new programmes. September for next year and then as needed	Important to ask why we want to offer the course; is there a local or regional need; what are the resource implications	Monitor effectiveness of panels to approve new courses
Annual course review	Annual course review with HE guidelines to match the process of QAA subject review. Student views included. Learning resources discussed. Clear process for reporting to higher levels, taking and	Important for teams to review the course reflectively to lead to continuous improvement. Informs college strategy. Helps with development of QAA self-evaluation documents. Important to ensure team ownership of	To be supported by the Development Fund. Training to take place. New template in operation for 2001-02

	monitoring actions and their outcomes. Throughout the year; submitted in September	the process	
	Periodic review Enhancement process to review programmes every four or five years with external advice	To ensure subject area offers quality provision that fits HE strategy	Three reviews in 2002-2003: Drama Music Media Make up
Structure of formal college committees reporting to academic board and the corporation	HE sub-committee or forum; membership of course leaders and others involved in HE; course review issues discussed. May report to formal college committees. Monthly – nine per year	A forum to share good practice, agree key elements of delivering HE, focus on HE issues	
Student representative meetings	HE student rep meetings, site-based. Concerns followed through and outcomes reported back to students. Three per year	To take account of student views, with actions, and to ensure they know they are being heard	Training event arranged with HEI student union president
External scrutiny			
Common inspection framework OFSTED/ALI whole college inspections or area inspections	QAA academic review leading to subject review Peer review process so a very different style and approach. Every six years, dates negotiated with QAA	Need to be aware of the timescale so there is maximum time to embed processes that will be involved in subject review	Prepare by keeping the process in mind at every stage and ensuring our systems match what is required and are demonstrably applied

10.4 Student and staff feedback

Over the last few years there has been increased emphasis on making use of student feedback. Institutions gather the views of their students about their experience throughout the student life-cycle, consider them, take action where appropriate or possible, and inform the students of the outcomes. Asking the questions is not enough: there needs to be clear evidence of the complete process and closing the loop to demonstrate that feedback contributes to effective assurance and enhancement.

A strategic and planned approach will incorporate:

- clarification to students about why their feedback is being sought

- feedback at different stages of the HE learning cycle
- feedback at different levels – staff and student, unit and programme
- monitoring of changes that happen as a result
- feedback to students on action taken to demonstrate where enhancement has taken place, or where action could not be taken and why.

The Government's White Paper on the future of higher education (January 2003) announces plans to introduce a national annual student survey in higher education to cover teaching quality. The survey will be directed at HEIs, and include their franchised provision, but it will not cover directly funded HE in FECs as the LSC already conducts a separate survey of FECs.

Bradford College

Below is a summary of the college's system for student feedback. A longer extract on the web shows how feedback works within the college structure.

Student representatives are supported by the department and by the college students' union. Course committees, comprising staff and student representatives (including a representative from the college library services):

- act as a means of communication between staff and students
- meet regularly during the academic year
- actively encourage and support student participation
- receive reports on unit feedback processes and the college-wide survey on student perceptions of courses.

Unit feedback is conducted by the departments and by course teams. Normally feedback is obtained at the end of every unit each time it is taught. A variety of methods is used including:

- feedback questionnaires
- unit questionnaires
- formally minuted meetings between staff and students of the course team.

Examples of changes that departments and course teams may make in response to unit feedback relate to:

- updating unit content
- updating reading lists
- review of teaching and learning methods
- review of the timing of course work submission
- teaching rooms
- the availability of IT and library resources
- mode of assessment.

Central questionnaires on student perceptions of courses are conducted at three stages through the duration of a course programme:

- post induction
- mid-course
- end of course.

A report is compiled by the academic standards unit from the data that has been produced. Departments receive a copy of the report. The information is cascaded down to course team level, and a summary of the report is fed back to the students taking part in the survey (via student notice boards and course committee meetings.)

Opportunities for informal feedback are maintained in order to:

- maximise student involvement in the teaching and learning process
- promote staff-student communication throughout the year
- deal with urgent or pressing problems.

Information on action taken is passed back to the students:

- minutes of the course committee meetings (with unit reviews and reports appended) are posted on the student notice boards
- action taken on issues raised by student representatives is reported at the following course committee meeting
- departments are introducing a summary of action taken and new developments, to be posted on the student notice boards.

Additional material on the web: Student feedback systems, Bradford College.

Bournemouth & Poole College

Student representatives system:

- each course has a student representative who attends a termly quality team meeting
- students frequently meet the link tutor and HE administrator prior to the meeting to raise any issues. Some of the basic issues have been about rooms, or IT facilities
- students did not know all the facilities they could use and tutors were able to remedy this immediately
- the tutors then made sure subsequent intakes had a list at induction
- Bournemouth University runs training courses for students working on representation and development
- student representatives go to the College Student Council so they can be active in both institutions
- standard questionnaires are used by both the university and the college.

South Nottingham College

The college established a Student Council in September 2001, with governor and senior manager representation as well as student support staff, youth workers and elected representatives from every programme. This is divided into 19+ (mainly HE) and 16-18 (mainly FE). It meets at least once a term to achieve immediate action on issues raised by students.

Suffolk College

Suffolk College has some additional features to gain student feedback:

- a standing agenda item on student feedback at course committee meetings
- feedback in personal and group tutorials
- school focus groups
- via entry, exit and module/unit questionnaires
- a student meeting is an integral aspect of re-approval validation events. Student views are also sought by the accrediting university during the process of re-accreditation

- via the students' union
- appeals and complaints procedures
- student charter.

QAA report

City College Manchester, Art and Design, 2000

'An effective feedback system to students operates, entailing both access to minutes of formal meetings and a display of Listening to You posters that outline requests, issues and responses to them.'

University of Loughborough

The university was funded under HEFCE's FDTL programme to carry out a project on 'Teaching quality systems in business and management studies – the student interface'.

An FE colleague says: 'As part of their dissemination obligations they produced a series of fascinating and very sensible briefing papers regarding student feedback which were generally applicable to all courses, not just to business and management studies.'

More information is on the web-site of HEFCE's National Co-ordination Team, www.ncteam.ac.uk under Projects, Subjects/themes, then Business/Economics.

Staff feedback

There are a number of ways in which staff views are made known, either among themselves or by ensuring that senior managers are aware of what they think. Good practice includes:

- staff surveys, such as on levels of stress, or opinion about structures or the operation of groups and committees
- staff appraisal or review offers individuals the opportunity to comment on their work, conditions and development needs
- committees and meetings give staff an opportunity to raise issues and express opinions, especially course team meetings. They should also receive feedback on the outcomes of issues raised
- a higher education forum where staff teaching on HE courses can discuss strategies, share good practice and affect policy
- surgeries held at specific times when managers are available to meet with staff on an informal basis
- newsletters and briefing notes offer staff the opportunity to express their views.

Waltham Forest College

The college carries out an evaluative monitoring process at the end of each module. This encourages staff to be reflective practitioners by analysing data, considering what worked and what did not. The short written evaluation is discussed at course team meetings – everyone reads each other's evaluations and they become part of the annual course review.

Barnet College

At Barnet College, part-time staff are involved in discussions about planning and course delivery by being paid to attend breakfast or twilight meetings. This ensures that their views are heard.

This reinforces many colleges' assertion that time must be found for review activities. Many are using the HEFCE Development Fund to support this kind of work.

10.5 Key features of QAA academic review

The sections that follow could usefully be read in conjunction with a paper published by the Association of Colleges, 'Preparing for academic review' (October 2002) which deals with all the following areas in much greater detail. It is available on the web from www.rqa.org.uk/qualitypacks or by e-mail from qualitypacks@aoc.co.uk.

In revising the methodology of subject review and by introducing academic review, the QAA's intention was to reduce the burden on institutions by making the process less intensive and demanding. FECs, while acknowledging the demands and increased workload, have frequently found subject review a useful staff development exercise that has enhanced the student learning experience of their higher education provision. Since the 'Handbook for academic review' was published in April 2000, major policy decisions mean that only directly funded FECs will now have systematic subject-level review. Any indirectly funded provision will normally be included in the HEI's institutional audit. The HEFCE-funded consortia are given a choice as to whether they would prefer to be reviewed separately or as a group.

Academic review offers greater scope for negotiating a pattern of review tailored to the needs of the subject area and the institution. There will be an emphasis on greater selectivity in relation to review activities and evidence sought.

Health warning

Below we summarise the key points and make some links of particular interest to FECs, but it is **essential** that everyone involved with the review reads carefully the 'Handbook for academic review'. The process is set out in detail and the handbook is an invaluable guide to planning and preparation. It is available on the QAA web-site (www.qaa.ac.uk/publications) or in hard copy (£5.00) from Linney Direct, Adamsway, Mansfield, Nottinghamshire, NG18 4FN (tel 01623 450788, fax 01623 450629, e-mail qaa@linneydirect.com).

When the handbook was published, in April 2000, the QAA expected it to apply to both HEIs and FECs. Some sections of the handbook, which would have applied only to HEIs, are no longer relevant. This has caused confusion in some colleges. The following sections do not apply to FECs:

- pp 18-22: Institutional review
- pp 28-29: Annex B – Initial profiles
- pp 54-56: Annex L – Self-evaluation documents for institutional review
- pp 57–60: Annex M – Guidelines on producing the institutional review report.

10.6 Key features of subject-level review

A self-evaluation document (SED) is submitted two months before the period in which the review will take place. The SED is a significant document and will form the basis for the whole review. It is important that it be genuinely *evaluative*.

The SED follows the guidelines in the 'Handbook for academic review' Annex C, with a prescribed word length of 6,000 words for the evaluation. Colleges should indicate where their supporting evidence can be found.

The subject aims and learning outcomes are crucial and will be expected to take account of the relevant subject benchmark statement for degree programmes. The framework for higher education qualifications does not yet place HNC/HND at one of its levels. This is currently under discussion between the QAA and the QCA (see **Section 2.1**).

All courses require a programme specification, a factual description of the course which sets out its intended aims and learning outcomes and the means by which they are achieved. The programme specification is part of or an annex to the SED.

Ownership by the subject team of the programme specification and any work carried out on other QAA external reference points is essential. It is no use hiding behind Edexcel systems or those of a validating HEI. It is the college's programme.

Benchmark statements for all subjects at undergraduate level are published. Although there are no benchmark statements for HND/HNC provision, colleges are encouraged to make reference in their programme specification to the relevant published statement, especially where students progress onto a degree programme.

The QAA code of practice is intended to assist institutions with their quality assurance by identifying precepts for good practice. The QAA has advised colleges by letter that the four sections of most significance for academic review are:

- programme approval, monitoring and review
- assessment of students (see **Section 4**)
- external examining
- collaborative provision (see **Section 7**).

Annex E of the code gives detailed information about the range of points of interest to the reviewers. There are prompts in seven sections:

- aims and outcomes
- curricula
- assessment and achievement
- enhancement
- teaching and learning
- student progression
- the effective utilisation of learning resources.

In addition, the review will report on student achievement and make a statement on the maintenance and enhancement of quality and standards.

The review visit will probably consist of an initial meeting and one or two other days on-site. The QAA will identify start dates for the review, which could last five or six weeks altogether. The visit is customised to the institution by negotiation and based on the SED. There will normally be a preliminary meeting with the review co-ordinator in advance of the review.

There is no requirement for a base room, although the documentation listed as evidence in the SED must be available to the reviewers on request.

There is no oral feedback meeting. The institution receives a letter with the reviewers' judgements in around two weeks. Be warned that some colleges find this a bit disheartening at the end of the review as there is no clear feeling of closure.

The institution will receive a draft of the review report for comment on factual accuracy prior to publication.

The first academic reviews took place in 2002. Table 20 summarises the results.

Table 20 Summary of academic reviews, January to July 2002

Total reviews: 73 (36 single, 37 aggregate)

Academic standards
67 confidence in subject
2 no confidence in subject
4 no confidence in one or more programmes

Quality of learning opportunities
Teaching and learning
38 commendable in subject
27 approved in subject
8 commendable/approved

Student progression
36 commendable in subject
25 approved in subject
10 commendable/approved
1 failed in subject

Learning resources
18 commendable in subject
43 approved in subject
12 commendable/approved

North Trafford College

The academic review process was well organised and supported by QAA with regular contact, by telephone and e-mail, that was neither excessive nor over-burdensome.

The review co-ordinator was thorough, supportive and understanding and communication with the subject review facilitator was clear, constructive and prompt.

The review itself was conducted efficiently, courteously and in a civilised manner. Specialist subject reviewers were cognisant of and empathetic towards the issues involved in delivery of HE in the further education environment.

Colleagues looked back on the exercise as a valuable opportunity to receive the views of peers, external to the college, providing a form of consultancy and a platform for the development of an action plan to enhance our continuous improvement. There was an initial fear factor for many, based on the unknown, but if those same colleagues were involved in another academic review in the near future this level of anxiety would not be created.

Havering College

Havering College is a mixed economy college with approximately 15 per cent of its provision at HE level directly funded by HEFCE. The subject review of social work was conducted between March and May 2002. Our SED was drawn up according to the instructions and guidance provided in the handbook for academic review. We took careful note of the advice offered by the QAA at the briefing sessions particularly to:

- state unambiguously the aims of the programme
- be clear about the learning outcomes
- avoid descriptive text
- be evaluative
- identify and own problems and indicate what actions we were taking to address issues that had been identified.

The process of review, whilst taxing and anxiety-inducing, was not an unpleasant experience. Key reasons for this are:

- the process was conducted precisely as it is set out in the handbook and explained at the QAA briefings
- there were no surprises in the way the team conducted the review and no 'hidden agenda'
- the preliminary meeting between the review co-ordinator, course team leader and the subject review facilitator was invaluable
- the review panel used the SED as the main tool for evaluating the prog amme aims and learning outcomes
- all meetings were conducted in a professional manner – an environment was created by the panel that allowed for free and frank discussions
- the subject review facilitator was kept informed at all times and used effectively as a conduit for information.

For us the process was very smoothly conducted due, in the main, to the approach of the review co-ordinator who set out the requirements in a clear and unambiguous manner via the subject review facilitator.

We placed all related documentation on our intranet and provide password access to a 'QAA Review' site for all panel members to access remotely. This was cited as exemplary practice by a QAA observer at the time of the review.

10.7 External reference points

A central change in the move towards a standards-based review methodology is the stated requirement for institutions to address external reference points in their practice and in the SED. The four key reference points are described below in relation to FE colleges with HNDs and HNCs as they differ from the requirements for degree courses:

- the framework for higher education qualifications (see **Section 1**)
- subject benchmark statements (see **Section 1**)

- programme specifications
- the QAA code of practice for the assurance of academic quality and standards in higher education.

Programme specifications

Annex D (pp 34-35) of the handbook for academic review sets out the purpose and content of programme specifications. The QAA also publishes guidelines for preparing programme specifications. The following is a quote from the handbook:

> 'In a programme specification a teaching team sets out clearly and concisely:
>
> - the intended learning outcomes of the programme
> - the teaching and learning strategies that enable learners to achieve these outcomes and the assessment strategies used to enable students to demonstrate their achievement;
> - the relationship of the programme and its study elements to the qualifications framework.
>
> It is important that course teams show clearly how they will develop the knowledge and understanding, cognitive and other skills and attributes.
>
> Programme specifications provide information to a range of stakeholders:
>
> - students
> - prospective students
> - external examiners or verifiers
> - accrediting bodies and employers.'

Programme specifications are of particular interest to students since they provide a brief, factual description of the programme (see **Section 5**). However, it is difficult to draft a programme specification that meets the needs of all the audiences identified. Some HEIs and colleges have done this by developing web pages that facilitate different levels of access to more detailed information through links to other documents. Others have drafted 'layers' of detail which are introduced gradually to students.

An extract from a programme specification is given below, with the full specification on the web. The detailed way in which teaching, learning and assessment strategies are linked to outcomes makes this particularly useful.

Additional material on the web: Full programme specifications for an HNC in computing, and a BA in counselling and psychology in community settings.

Programme specification for HNC in Computing

1.1	Awarding body	:	Edexcel (BTEC)
1.2	Teaching institutions	:	Anonymous College
1.3	Accreditation	:	Edexcel is in contact with the British Computer Society regarding accreditation
1.4	Final awards	:	Higher National Certificate
1.5	Programme titles	:	Higher National Certificate in Computing
1.6	UCAS codes	:	HNCs are not assigned UCAS codes
1.7	Subject benchmark	:	Computing
1.8	Date of production	:	February 2002

2 Programme aims (see full document on web-site)

2.2 Award specific aims (see full document on web-site)

2.3 Learning outcomes (extract):

- demonstrate an understanding of the basis operations for computers and their associated peripherals and software:
  - evaluate performance of a selected computer system
  - employ operating systems
  - upgrade a computer system
  - participate in the planning of a network installation
- demonstrate an understanding of data and functional modelling techniques and use a variety of systems analysis and design methodologies:
  - compare different lifestyle models
  - perform a system investigation
  - perform functional and data modelling.

In addition to the learning outcomes, the student is also required to demonstrate competence in Edexcel common skills.

2.4 Teaching, learning and assessment strategies

- It is the school's aim to emphasise the role of lecturer as learning facilitator and for the student to have a responsibility for her/his own learning.

In deciding how modules should be taught and how learning will take place and be assessed, two important principles have been used:

- that each module should be taught and assessed in the way that best fits the subject matter rather than imposing common learning and assessment methods across all modules
- that the student should have the opportunity to experience a variety of different ways of working and to demonstrate their skills and knowledge in the most appropriate way.

Thus the student will, depending on the module being studied, encounter one or more of the following teaching methods:

- formal lectures

- problem-based tutorials
- practical laboratory sessions
- surgeries
- group-based studies
- investigations.

Assessment will be accomplished using the following methods, as appropriate:

- individual coursework assignments
- group-work assignments
- presentations
- demonstrations
- written reports
- laboratory log books
- in-class tests.

The programme learning outcomes can be categorised under four distinct headings: knowledge & understanding, cognitive skills, practical skills, and transferable skills.

Practical skills

(The following extract gives some of the learning outcomes, and shows how these can link to different methods of teaching and learning and assessment.)

a. Demonstrate knowledge and practical experience in managing, installing users and software on to a network.

b. Demonstrate knowledge and practical implementation of database systems and their basic design principles.

c. Create and manage web-based applications focusing on server side management and the mechanisms to link web pages to databases.

Teaching and learning methods:

- lectures, tutorials (a, b, c)
- practical sessions (a, b, c)
- demonstrations (a)
- case studies (a, b, c)
- supervised project work (b, c)

Assessment:

- coursework (a, b, c)
- project (b)
- group project work (b, c)
- a portfolio of practical programming tasks (c)

10.8 Writing the self-evaluation document

The SED will have a significantly more important part to play in academic review than was true of self-assessment documents (SADs) under the previous method. The SADs were frequently criticised for not being sufficiently evaluative.

The SED will form the basis of the review and will determine the kind of visit and the documents to be made available. Annex C of the handbook for academic review sets out guidelines for producing SEDs. There are headings to provide a structure and word lengths (a maximum of 6,000 words for the evaluation). It can take months to write the document so it is worth starting as early as you can. Annex E of the handbook (pp 37-42) is useful to understand what sort of questions the reviewers will ask.

The dates for the five periods a year of academic review are published by the QAA and colleges will usually have some months' notice of a subject review. The SED is submitted two months before the start date of the review.

An effective SED will demonstrate:

- evaluation and analysis
- team work
- a self-critical account of strengths and weaknesses
- what is being done to rectify weaknesses and promote strengths
- data about enrolment, retention, withdrawal, achievement and destinations
- evidence for claims
- reflection on internal review and evaluation processes, not just description
- what the college wants reviewers to know
- some involvement from students
- that the code of practice is being considered and implemented.

Separate judgements will be made about academic standards and the quality of learning opportunities, based on the overall aims.

As a working document for the review team, the SED needs:

- good layout
- clear headings
- paragraph and page numbers
- clear references to evidence cited
- to keep to the word length
- to be a physically robust document as it will be carried around a good deal.

For more detail on planning the development of the SED, see 'Preparing for academic review' (AoC, October 2002, cited above).

Annex A

Institutions and organisations that contributed to the project

Further education colleges

Barnet College
Bishop Burton College
Blackburn College
Blackpool College
Bournemouth and Poole College
Bradford College
Bridgewater College
Carlisle College
Chesterfield College
City of Bristol College
City College Manchester
City of Sunderland College
Cleveland College of Art and Design
College of North East London
Coventry College
Doncaster College
Dudley College
East Riding College
Farnborough College of Technology
Gloucestershire College of Arts and Technology
Grimsby College
Havering College
Hull College
Leeds College of Art and Design
Leeds College of Music
Macclesfield College
Manchester College of Arts and Technology
New College Durham
Norwich City College
Northbrook College
North Trafford College
North Tyneside College
Oaklands College
Oldham College
Otley College
Reading College
Solihull College
Somerset College of Arts and Technology
South East Essex College
South Cheshire College

South Nottinghamshire College
Sparsholt College
St Helen's College
Stockport College
Stoke on Trent College
Suffolk College
Wakefield College
Walsall College
Waltham Forest College
Warwickshire College
Westminster Kingsway College
West Nottinghamshire College
Wolverhampton College

Consortia

Anglia Polytechnic University Regional Partnership
Higher Education and Training Partnership
Humber FE/HE Consortium
Staffordshire University Regional Federation

Higher education institutions

Anglia Polytechnic University
Brunel University
Buckinghamshire Chilterns University College
Canterbury Christ Church University College
Coventry University
Middlesex University
Sheffield Hallam University
Staffordshire University
University of Hertfordshire
University of Huddersfield
University of Kent
University of Lancaster
University of Manchester
University of Plymouth
University of Sheffield
University of Sunderland
University of the West of England
University of Wolverhampton

Organisations

Association of Colleges
Council of Validating Universities
Department for Education and Skills

Edexcel
Learning and Teaching Support Network
Institute of Learning and Teaching for Higher Education
Learning and Skills Development Agency
Learning and Skills Research Network
Open University Validation Service
Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education
Staff and Educational Development Association

Annex B

Useful web-sites

Organisation/Topic	Web address	See section:
ACACHE (Association of Careers Advisers in Colleges offering HE)	www.fedpig.com/Acache	6.5
Accessible practice in HE	www.plymouth.ac.uk/disability	4.7, 6.8
Alumni associations on the web: Liverpool Institute for the Performing Arts; Rose Bruford College; Birmingham College of Food, Tourism and Creative Studies	www.lipa.ac.uk www.bruford.ac.uk www.bcftcs.ac.uk	5.3
Association of Colleges	www.aoc.co.uk	9.7, 10.5
Association of Graduate Recruiters	www.agr.org.uk	6.4
British Educational Communications and Technology Agency	www.becta.org.uk	2.6
Cambridge Training and Development Ltd	www.ctad.co.uk	6.5
Centre for Economic and Social Inclusion	www.uuy.org.uk	7.5
Council of Validating Universities	www.cvu.ac.uk	9.7
Demos project (providing on-line materials for staff awareness of disability issues)	http://jarmin.com/demos	6.8
Exchange: newsletter aimed at decision makers in learning and teaching	www.exchange.ac.uk	9.7
Hertfordshire Integrated Learning Project	www.herts.ac.uk/envstrat/HILP	2.1
Higher Education Funding Council for England	www.hefce.ac.uk	3.5, 7.3, 8.3
Institute for Learning and Teaching in Higher Education	www.ilt.ac.uk	9.3
Joint Information Systems Committee	www.jisc.ac.uk	2.3
Labour market information	www.statistics.gov.uk, then select Themes, Labour market	3.4, 7.5
Learning and Skills Development Agency	www.lsda.org.uk	9.3
Learning and Teaching Support Network	www.ltsn.ac.uk	4.2, 7.5, 9.3
National Association for Staff Development	www.nasd.org.uk	9.7
National Association of Business Studies Education	www.nabse.ac.uk	9.7
National Institute for Adult Continuing Education	www.niace.org.uk	5.4
National Training Organisations	www.nto-nc.org	3.4, 7.5
Plagiarism (JISC advisory service)	www.jiscpas.ac.uk	2.3, 4.3
Preparing for academic review	www.rqa.org.uk/qualitypacks	10.5
Quality Assurance Agency	www.qaa.ac.uk	2.1, 3.4, 6.7, 10.2, 10.5-10.8
Regional Development Agencies	www.dti.gov.uk then select Regional and Regional Development Agencies	3.4, 7.5

Sector Skills Development Agency	www.ssda.org.uk	3.4, 7.5
Skills development (Hertfordshire Integrated Learning Project)	www.herts.ac.uk/envstrat/HILP	2.1
Society for Research into Higher Education	www.srhe.ac.uk	9.7
Staff and Educational Development Association	www.seda.ac.uk	9.7
Student Progression and Transition (SPAT) project at University of Plymouth	www.spat.ac.uk	4.8, 6.9
Student support	www.dfes.gov.uk/studentsupport	6.10
Techdis (JISC service to improve provision for disabled students through technology)	www.techdis.ac.uk	6.8
Universities and Colleges Admissions Service	www.ucas.ac.uk	5.4, 6.12
White Paper on 'The future of higher education'	www.dfes.gov.uk under Publications	1.1, 3.1, 3.5, 6.11, 7.1, 8.5, 8.6, 10.4

Annex C

Additional materials on the web

These materials are available with this document on the HEFCE web-site, www.hefce.ac.uk under 'Publications/HEFCE 2003/15). They can be downloaded and customised.

Title	See section:
Self-assessment questions for independent learners Lansing College	2.4
Choosing a virtual learning environment City College Manchester	2.6
Programme approval template Open University	3.4
Model business plan for proposed HE course City College Manchester	3.4
Policy on local provision of HE with partner FECs University of Sunderland	7.4
Template for presenting quantitative student data	8.5
HE in FE and scholarly activity – a discussion paper New College Durham	9.4
Framework for assuring quality in a large FEC with substantial HE provision	10.3
Student feedback systems Bradford College	10.4
Programme specification for HNC in computing	10.7
Programme specification for BA in counselling and psychology in community settings Bradford College	10.7

Annex D

Glossary

The use of acronyms and jargon in education is a major barrier to any new colleague, corporation member or employer trying to understand HE in FE and the work it does. Educationalists usually slip into using these abbreviations for convenience and do not mean to confuse. Always ask for an explanation if you are unsure, especially with so many new initiatives and organisations coming onto the scene. Below are the acronyms in this document, along with some other terms that are commonly used in further and higher education in colleges.

ACACHE	Association of Careers Advisers in Colleges offering Higher Education
Adequacy and sufficiency	A term used in further education to ensure that key areas of the curriculum are available regionally; used by the Learning and Skills Council in its planning capacity
ALI	Adult Learning Inspectorate: inspects students over 19 in FECs together with OFSTED
AoC	Association of Colleges. Approximately 440 colleges are members. Lobbies, represents and provides services for the sector, including advice on employment matters
APL/APEL	Accreditation of prior learning, Accreditation of prior experiential learning
APU	Anglia Polytechnic University
Articulation	A smooth and effective fit between two separate systems (eg in progressing from HND to degree)
ASN	Additional student numbers
AUT	Association of University Teachers
BECTA	British Educational Communications and Technology Agency, the government web-site for information and communications technology in education
BTEC	Business and Technology Education Council (an awarding body for vocational qualifications, now known as Edexcel, although the BTEC label is still attached to qualifications)
CNAA	Council for National Academic Awards
CVU	Council of Validating Universities. The CVU welcomes FEC members, and holds an annual conference and other seminars, and produces publications. Contact j.a.lyon@leeds.ac.uk
DfEE	Department for Education and Employment (now the DfES)
DfES	Department for Education and Skills
DFLT	HEFCE Development Fund for Learning and Teaching
ERDF	European Regional Development Fund
ESF	European Social Fund
ESOL	English as a second language
FE	Further education. Although the term can be extended to all post-16 education, it usually applies to that provided outside school or university, that is, in FECs, sixth form colleges or specialist institutions. Some FE is provided within HEIs, just as some FECs provide HE courses

FEC	Further education college
FHEQ	Framework for higher education qualifications (QAA)
FTE	Full-time equivalent
HE	Higher education
HEFCE	Higher Education Funding Council for England. National body which distributes public funding for HE in universities and colleges. Provides the direct funding for HNC, HND and degree programmes offered by FECs
HEI	Higher education institution
HEIFES	Higher Education in Further Education Student Survey (data)
HEIST	Specialist marketing services agency for HE. Provides mailing services, research and consultancy
HESA	Higher Education Statistics Agency; does not currently involve FECs with HE
HESDA	Higher Education Staff Development Association
HESES	Higher Education Students Early Statistics Survey
HNC	Higher National Certificate – an Edexcel award, usually part-time
HNC fast track	HNC completed in one year full-time rather than part-time in two years
HND	Higher National Diploma – an Edexcel award, usually full-time
HND top-up	Additional six units need to top up an HNC to an HND qualification
IAG	Information, Advice and Guidance network
ICT	Information and communications technology
IIP	Investors in People: 'kitemark' for employers
ILR	Individual Learning Record
ILTHE	Institute of Learning and Teaching for Higher Education
IT	Information technology
ITT	Initial Teacher Training
JISC	Joint Information Systems Committee
LEA	Local education authority: responsible for education in schools, and student support for HE tuition fees
Learndirect	A national telephone line to advise prospective students about appropriate courses of study
LMI	Labour market intelligence: data on employment characteristics, skills shortages etc, which can inform the planning process
LSC	Learning & Skills Council. Replaced the Further Education Funding Council in 2001. Funds further education in colleges and private training providers. Funds much non-prescribed higher education (NVQ level 4/5 and professional qualifications)
LSDA	Learning & Skills Development Agency. National organisation for professional development and research in the FE sector
LSRC	Learning and Skills Research Centre
LSRN	Learning and Skills Research Network, operated by LSDA
LTSN	Learning and Teaching Support Network, available to staff teaching HE in FECs and HEIs

MaSN	Maximum student numbers: the maximum number of full-time students HEFCE funded at an institution. This system has now been abolished although there are still agreed contracts for numbers of HEFCE-funded students
MEG	Mixed Economy Group – of FECs with substantial HE provision
MGL	Main grade lecturer
MIS	Management information systems
NATFHE	National Association of Teachers in Further and Higher Education: main union representing teaching staff in FE and some in HE
NIACE	National Institute of Adult and Continuing Education (England and Wales)
NIELB	Northern Ireland Education and Library Boards
NTFS	National Teaching Fellowship Scheme, administered by the ILTHE
NVQ	National Vocational Qualification: a vocational award which assesses competence in a range of occupations at levels from 1-5
OFSTED	Office of Standards in Education: government inspection service for schools and 16-19 provision in colleges
OUVS	Open University Validation Service, an awarding body
P4P	Partnerships for Progression: an initiative to promote widening participation and collaborative partnerships
Programme	Frequently used interchangeably with 'course'. In FECs, the HND/HNC might be the programme and each HND or HNC the course. In some HEIs the programme is the complete offering and the course is the module within it
Progression	Moving on to a degree or postgraduate programme after an HND or undergraduate degree; or moving into employment
QAA	Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education: body responsible for academic and subject reviews
QCA	Qualifications and Curriculum Authority
SAAS	Student Awards Agency for Scotland
SCOP	Standing Conference of Principals: representative body for colleges and institutes of higher education
SED	Self evaluation document (for QAA academic review)
SEDA	Staff and Educational Development Association
SENDA	Special Educational Needs and Disabilities Act 2001
SRF	Subject review facilitator (for QAA subject review)
SRHE	Society for Research into Higher Education
SSC	Sector Skills Council
SSDA	Sector Skills Development Agency
SURF	Staffordshire University Regional Federation
THES	Times Higher Educational Supplement. Published Fridays, this is the trade paper for HE, and includes job advertisements
TQM	Total Quality Management
UCAS	Universities and Colleges Admissions Service
UfI	University for Industry: established to promote distance learning/on-line learning opportunities using ICT

UHI	University of the Highlands and Islands
UNISON	Union representing support staff
UUK	Universities UK: employer organisation for vice-chancellors, representing HEIs (formerly called CVCP, the Committee of Vice-chancellors and Principals)
UVAC	Universities Vocational Award Council, accredits NVQs and other vocational awards
VLE	Virtual learning environment
Widening participation	Government policy to encourage more people, from a wider range of backgrounds, to take part in higher education. The target is 50 per cent of people between 18-30 to experience higher education by 2010

U.S. Department of Education
Office of Educational Research and Improvement (OERI)
National Library of Education (NLE)
Educational Resources Information Center (ERIC)

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